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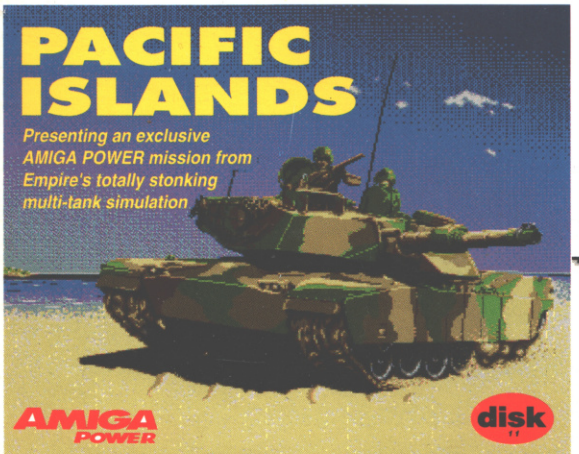


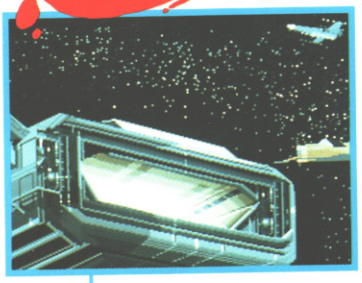
PD

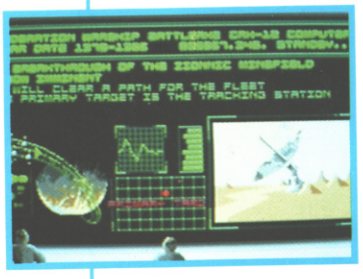
ROLLERPEDE — Top insect action
SHOOT OUT — Frenzied blasting
MISSION X — All action sequel

OCEAN'S NEW WAVE

ISSUE 11

2 3D SPEC





"Fast just isn't the word for this 3D - an excellent game that more than lives up to it's name." - **ACE**

"Epic is one of the finest products i have played this year, the depth of gameplay and graphics are of a truly stunning standard. .. the sheer number of vectors used on the screen is incredible with the final battle having over 500 independently minded ships." - Games X

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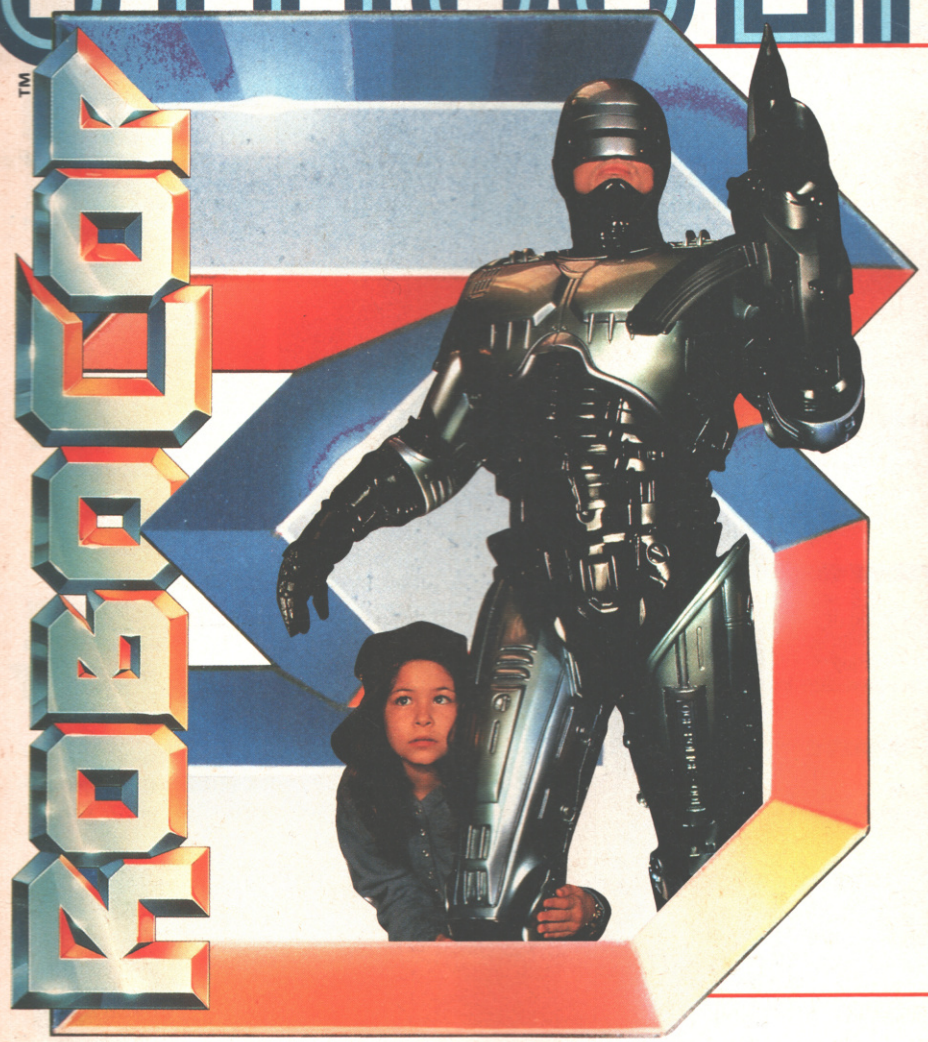
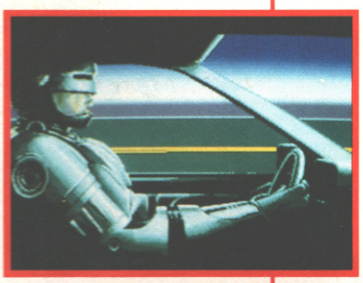
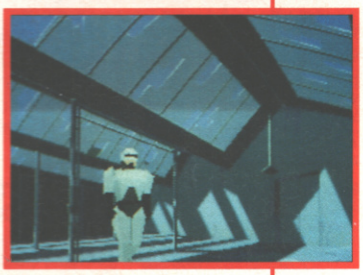
CTACULARS







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re "Knocks your socks off... you've never seen 3D as good as this. The 3D twist works extremely well and arguably makes Robocop 3 th the best film licence yet." - **ACE** "The vectors are super slick and smooth, all animations are top notch, giving us some of the best vectors around and the screens are superbly drawn. This is definitely one of the best film licences yet." - **GAMES X**

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AMIGA POWER

ISSUE 11 MARCH 1992

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SPECIAL THANKS THIS ISSUE GO TO: Tim Harris of Bath Gladiators American Football Club for the loan of the kit seen on page 11. Cheers Tim, and thanks to Marcus too for manfully managing to squeeze into it. Also a big thank you to hero-of-the-hour Pat McDonald for helping out with the cover disk. Cheers matey.

GOOD LUCK TO: Kate Hodges, the ed's ex-flattie, friend of AMIGA POWER, and mum to be (indeed, probably full-blown mum by the time you read this). Keep those pelvic floor exercises up, girlie! And welcome into the world little Jake or Chloe Hodges (depending on what sex you are) – have a good one!

THIS MONTH'S COMPO: You know what's been the trendiest thing in Europe – especially France – for the past year or so now? It's little metal-and-enamel badges – or 'pins' – isn't it? The French wear them everywhere, and it's a real status symbol to have a better or more unusual one than your mates. Well, here at AMIGA POWER we're getting into pin-mania too – ever since that nice lady from Loriciels gave us some neat little *Baby Jo* ones in fact – and we want some more. Send your top-quality badges to us at the AMIGA POWER address above. The best submissions win software prizes.

AMIGA POWER comes to you from Future Publishing, home of Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper, ST Format, Your Sinclair, Commodore Format, Amstrad Action, Sega Power, Totall, Public Domain and other top quality mags.

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10 TRUE STORIES
New Amigas rumoured – and look what they can do! Plus: *Sensible Soccer, Cannon Fodder, Titus The Fox, The Indy Action Game*, win an American Football shirt and – of course – all your favourite regulars.

16 THE CHARTS
The ones that are going up, the ones that are coming down and (erm) lots of other ones. Plus top chart comment – it's all here!

43 COMPLETE CONTROL
Over 10 pages of the best tips around, in the Amiga's premier hints section. *Knights Of The Sky* and *Another World* get the mega treatment, plus The Last Resort (with Jonathan Davies) kicks off – we may have blatantly nicked the title from a well known TV chat show, but the rest of this long-awaited Q&A section is all new!

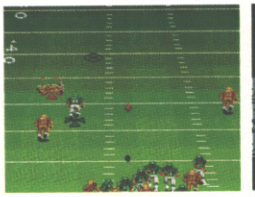
64 IF I'D KNOW THEN...
Fergus McGovern of Probe Software, perhaps the UK's top converter of arcade games, talks about the past and – yes! – the future!

82 DEFINITION OF SOUND
This month – the fabulous world of platform games. And to cope with such a HUGE subject matter our unique buyer's guide actually goes up a page in size. Hurrah!

91 DO THE WRITE THING
This is the bit that YOU write – so don't come running to *us* if you think it's a load of old crap. This month: an attempt to think up some funny *Lemmings* names, the Emperor Of The United States Of America (yes, really), our 'brilliant' year, should we introduce the 'red pages' to the back of the mag(!) and the LAST EVER Stuart N Hardy!

96 THE BOTTOM LINE
The world's biggest monthly (well, we can't think of a bigger one) guide to the vast back catalogue of Amiga games once again gets squished into eight pages. Keep your heads down – it's going to explode one of these days!

GAMES OF THE MO



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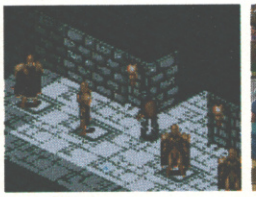
Best American Football game ever! Page 20



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New 'Photoscape' FRP system Page 24

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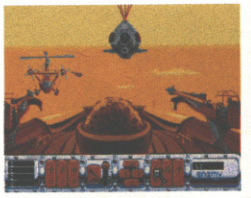
Oh dear. Oh deary deary dear... Page 26



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French arcade strategy just gets better Page 32

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As every month, there has to be a *Dungeon Master*-clone... Page 34

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Possibly the biggest FRP ever Page 38

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Britain's biggest software the most exciting range of lined up for this year. Read

68 MEGA LO MANIA II: DIARY OF A GAME

Starts this month – Sensible Software's month-by-month account of the trials and tribulations of putting together a top quality original game. This month: the basic idea starts to gel...

OVER 300
GAMES RATED IN EVERY ISSUE!

MONTH

HARLEQUIN
Sonic The Hedgehog? Robocod? Pah! *This* is how it's done... Page 28

WIN! A TRIP TO PARIS WITH UBI SOFT! Page 89

N'S AVE

house has one of games it's ever had all about them here, and then, on page 60, learn the philosophy behind them from Ocean Software director Gary Bracey.

Gary Bracey (far left) and one of Ocean's big new games, *Epic*. This could just be the best year the Manchester-based software giants have had since they got into 16-bit...

104 SUBS! Always promised yourself a subscription? Then get it here. Plus! Back issues, binders and lots of other good stuff!

106 AMIGA UNIVERSE New this month! Your complete handbook to every major computer characterto appear on the Amiga!

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disk 11

Following the there's-no-other-way-to-say-it-but ecstatic response to the massive section of MicroProses's spectacular *Knights Of The Sky* given away on a recent coverdisk, we bring you another special disk. This month's *Pacific Islands* preview isn't just any old demo, but a complete playable game scenario in its own right. Here's your chance to buy, arm and then take command of a group of 16 state of the art battle tanks in a specially prepared AMIGA POWER mission, put together by programmers The Mystery Machine. If you're not completely engrossed by it all there's something wrong with you. Don't worry though, arcade freaks – we haven't forgotten about more immediate thrills! This trio of arcade classics should keep you in jollies for weeks.

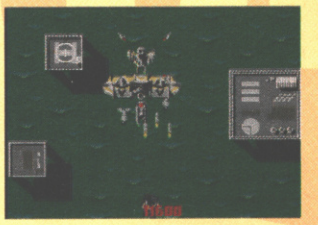
AND THIS IS DISK 11

PACIFIC ISLANDS

Empire's long awaited tank battle game is the sequel to big hit *Team Yankee*, but a better program in every way. Find out how much better with this AMIGA POWER mission.

MISSION X – RAID II

Follow up to last month's *SWIV*-like *Raid*, this brand new blaster is just as *SWIV*-inspired and just as hard (ie very) but better in every significant way. Only the toughest need apply.

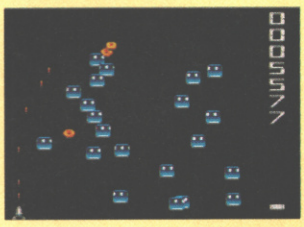


ROLLERPEDE

Frantic shooting and dodging action in the style of the arcade classic *Centipede*, this new PD extravaganza takes us back to the days when every game had something new to offer. Quite simply, a gem.

SHOOT OUT

Not available to A500P owners, unfortunately, this extra bonus game – another classic blaster, which will probably surprise absolutely no one – is as simple as they come. It's also a whole lot of fun. Need we say more?



GOT A FAULTY DISK?

It's not very likely, but it *does* happen. If you happen to be one of the unlucky few, send your faulty disk to Disk Copy Labs plc, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry NN4 4SA, NOT to the AMIGA POWER address. Further details on the whole process of disk returns are given just over the page...

disk 11

PACIFIC I

READ ME FIRST!

1. First, ensure your Amiga is switched off, with a joystick plugged into Joystick Port Two and a mouse in Joystick Port One.
2. Insert your top-quality AMIGA POWER coverdisk into the internal disk drive and switch the power on.
3. You'll be asked to press Y if you want to play *Pacific Islands*, or N if you wish to move on to the main menu. Press the Return key after making your selection. Please note that 512K owners will NOT be able to go back and load *Pacific Islands* from the main menu. If you pressed Y then wait for *Pacific Islands* to load, otherwise peruse the menu which will shortly appear.
4. Select which piece of top-quality action takes your fancy and press the appropriate function key.
5. If you're trying to load *Mission X* and the Amiga prints an error message, don't worry. It just means you don't have the memory to load the title screen.
6. Please note that *Shoot Out* is NOT A500Plus compatible.
6. Once your game has loaded, leave the disk in the disk drive! And that's all there is to it!

IT AIN'T WORKING?

If the disk fails to work correctly in some way or another, there are several things you can do.
1. Firstly, try starting the whole process over again from the beginning, making sure that you don't have any peripherals (extra disk drives etc) plugged into your machine. Amigas are notoriously picky about that kind of thing.
2. If that doesn't help, you've probably got a corrupt disk. It's just conceivable that you could repair it using the Disk Doctor program which should have come with your machine (instructions should be in your user manual).
3. If that doesn't work either, then help is still at hand. Simply package the disk up securely in a jiffy bag or somesuch and send it off NOT TO US, PLEASE, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, but to: *AMIGA POWER Disk 11 Returns, Disk Copy Labs plc, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry, NN4 4SA.*

Give them a few days to recover from the shock of one of the disks not working properly (say up to 28 before you start hassling them), and they'll despatch a new one to you with all due swiftness.

Publisher: Empire
Authors: The Mystery Machine

It's 1995, the location is an island somewhere in the Pacific, and the unthinkable has happened. You find yourself caught up in a confrontation with the Soviets, who've taken control of the island, and are currently manufacturing tanks to hunt you down and eradicate the Western forces.

There's something wonderfully ego-friendly about blasting the hell out of enemy installations and playing cat-and-mouse with enemy vehicles, and now, with our exclusively-prepared *Pacific Islands* mission, you can experience that feeling of power first-hand. *Pacific Islands* places you in command of sixteen US tanks, in a close-range combat situation on a Soviet-controlled island.

The first thing to do is to enter your name in the roster. Click on one of the Commander folders using the mouse pointer, then simply type your name and press RETURN. You will then be presented with the briefing screen. The map of the island is displayed to the left, with a notepad containing all mission details to the right. Follow the on-screen instructions until you are ready to go to the game proper. (There is the opportunity to lay a mine or drop a bomb or smoke screen at pre-determined positions at this point, but it's a good idea to leave this option for the moment. You'll only blow yourself up).

THE (DEAD) MOTOR POOL

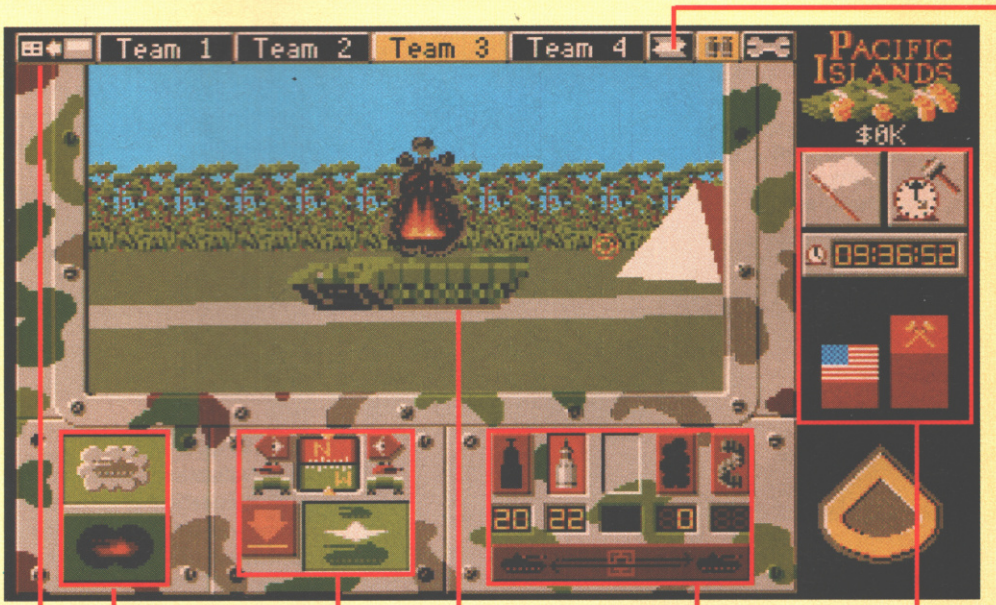
When you're ready to move onto the battalion setup screen, click on the icon at the top-left corner of the screen (it will look like a pair of crossed swords). Before entering the main arena (an island in the Pacific, strangely enough) your battalion must be built up and armed. The battalion is split up into four teams (or companies), with each team being controlled as a whole. Because a team can't be split up, it makes sense to have a cross-section of tanks in the team (ie two standard shell-firing tanks, and two missile launchers). This will then give more options when it comes to offensive tactics.

If this is your first game, then it's a good idea to simply go with the default settings. Once done, click on the icon at the top-left of the screen again (this time it will resemble four boxes with an arrow pointing to a larger box). This will then finally take you into the game proper, and you're ready to roll.

PRIME MOVER

As the on-screen instructions will have explained, the first objective is a dummy village to the south. A number of inactive Soviet tanks will be standing around, just begging to be used for target practice. Once you've got the hang of moving the

THE TRACKS OF MY CATERPILLARS



The top icon lets your tanks use their exhaust fumes as a smoke screen, while the one below activates infra-red nightsights

The icon at the top left switches between single and multi-team views

Another enemy tank stops dead in its Caterpillar tracks, a victim of good shooting

This collection of buttons control turret direction (click on the compass to re-align it with the tank direction), brakes and zoom function

The row along the top displays weapons remaining. Clicking on the strip below activates laser targetting (necessary for firing Sabbats)

The icons select surrender or pause, while the bars below indicate the strength of each side

ISLANDS

disk 11

teams around, and firing the various weapons, it's onto the two main objectives: a tank factory in the westernmost village to the south, and a radar station to the south-east. Travelling on roads is obviously the fastest but most dangerous, while attack of any kind is virtually impossible when in forest areas.

TOP TIPS FOR TANK TRAINEE TYPES

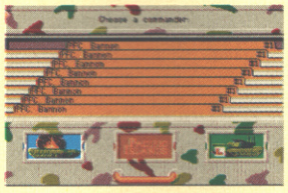
Although each team is initially comprised of four tanks, the player controls them as one, with the turret view is always as seen from the leader.

How you go about the mission is entirely up to you, but remember that going for the factory first will stop the island from getting over-run by Soviet patrols. Remember also that the Soviets don't have any rocket launchers, so if you've got one in your sights, then it's one of your own! The Soviets don't have infra-red either. This means that using smoke grenades to create walls of gas, then switching to infra-red mode, gives you total protection while still being able to pick off the enemy one by one. The Soviets aren't daft, though. Get the better of an enemy battalion and it'll probably retreat. And watch out for the enemy appearing from out of the forest, where your map systems can't always track them.

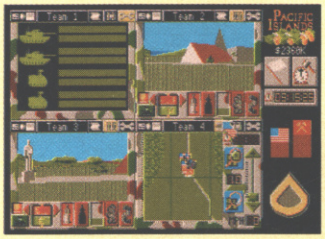
THIS IS THE DAY, THIS IS THE HOUR, THIS IS THIS

Once you get the hang of the various icons and control systems, things really get interesting. And if you enjoy playing this sample scenario, why not go out and buy the much larger full blown *Pacific Islands* game from Empire? It's due out at the beginning March, for a very reasonable £25.99, and is packed with fun for both strategy-heads and violence freaks alike. And all being well, we'll have a full review next month. ●

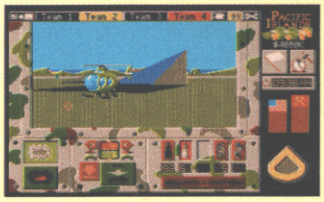
A minefield can be laid anywhere (be careful not to run any of your own tanks into it!), and artillery and smoke can be dropped at any time during the battle. The snag is that it must be requested before the mission even begins



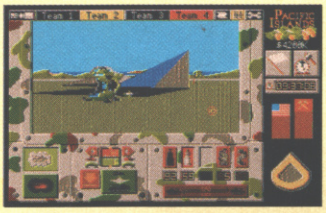
The Commander selection screen. Simply click on a folder, type in your name (followed by Return) and away you go. The icon at the bottom left quits the game. The other two don't really do much



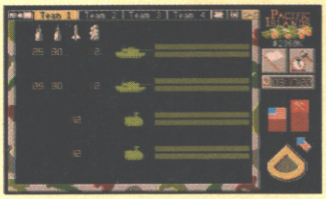
Keeping an eye on all four teams at once requires this cluttered but informative display. Each window has a set of controls for switching between the map display, the turret view, and the team status.



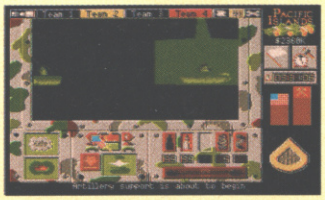
Oh look, a helicopter. I've got an idea...



...one little shell launched, and it's history.



It may not look interesting, but it's vital to keep an eye on this screen. It shows tank status and weapons remaining. Clicking on the team icons along the top lets you view each of the teams individually.



Operating in infra-red mode, smoke grenades can be used to create a wall which you can still see through.

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

If you do choose to manually set-up your battalion then this is what's on offer.

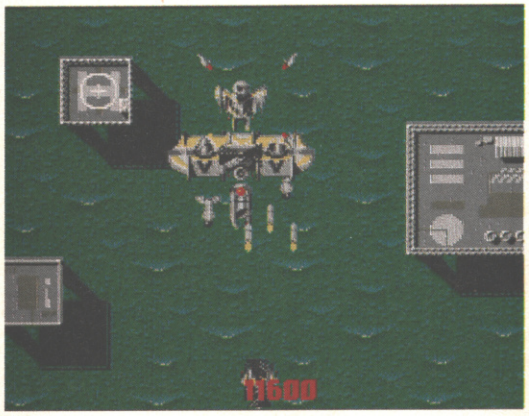
Bear in mind that you'll need some heavy duty launchers, so don't go blowing all your money on $2500K tanks. The weaponry shown below the tanks ranges from standard shells, through to armour-piercing shells, 'Sabbat' shells (they lose their 'sleeve' mid-flight, and are very deadly), and finally smoke grenades – always a must.

disk 11

AMIGA POWER PRESENTS THE BEST OF PD

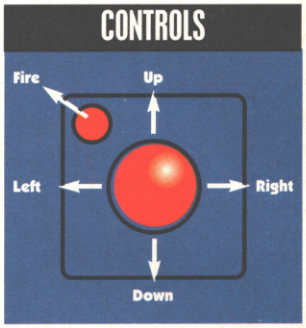
It's arcade time (again) in PD Corner (but don't worry, mind game fans, we've got a couple of very special things coming up for you soon), with three classic blasters for you to hone your skills on.

MISSION X – RAID II



***SWIV* fans will be even more strongly struck by a feeling of deja-vu than they were last month when they see this mid-level guardian. Luckily, though, it doesn't stay for long...**

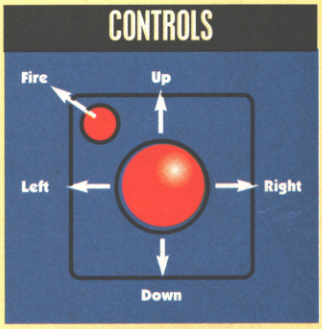
Fans of last month's *Raid* will be ecstatic to hear that this month we're bringing you the far superior sequel, *Mission X*. Basically exactly the same game, *Mission X* refines the graphics, gameplay and speed of the first game to create something which is just as tough but twice as playable. As if you needed reminding, the concept behind the game is a straightforward one (in fact, it's so straightforward it hardly deserves to be called a concept at all). You're flying a helicopter on a mission which is so secret they haven't even told you what it is, but it involves shooting everything you see, so you don't particularly mind. The only things you don't have to shoot are the little dollar signs which provide bonus points, but you can shoot them anyway just for the hell of it if you like. Every now and again you'll come up an end-of-level baddie-type thing, but you don't really want to know that. All you want to know is that you shouldn't worry about the error message which appears on the screen while the game is loading if you've only got a 512K machine, as it's only referring to the title screen. What are you waiting for? ●



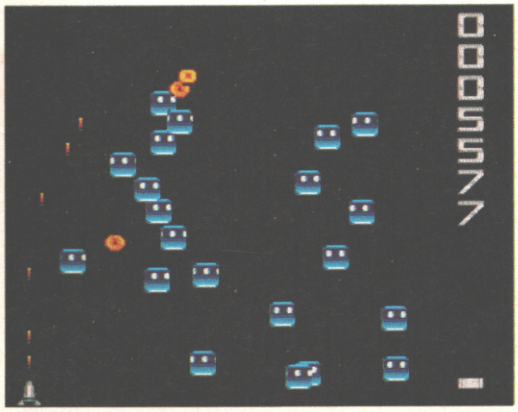
ROLLERPEDE

I hate the art department sometimes. I mean, how is anyone supposed to fill a box this size with stuff about a game as hopelessly simple as a *Centipede* clone? Still, I suppose I'd better get on with it, so... (Oh. Out of space).

Yes, it's that Nostalgia Corner moment again, and this month we're looking back through rose-tinted glasses at *Centipede*. This PD clone isn't a perfect conversion, but it captures the frantic pace and non-stop blasting frenzy admirably, so it's okay by us. You're the little ship at the bottom of the screen – as you seem to be a lot these days – and as soon as you start the game you're assailed by lots of multi-segmented centipede things. When you shoot one, it splits into two at the point where it was hit, and the segment you hit turns into a mushroom. Any centipede which then hits this mushroom will bounce off it and reverse its direction, dropping down a screen level at the same time. (This also happens when a centipede reaches either edge of the screen). When a centipede gets near the lowest level you're in big trouble (although you can still move up and down to avoid it), so you should make every effort to wipe them out before then. Other things to watch out for include the spaceship which travels along the top dropping bombs on you, the spider which bounces around, the homing missiles, and the power tokens to collect. ●

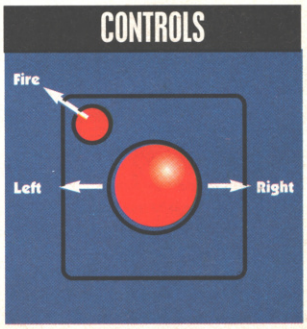


SHOOT OUT



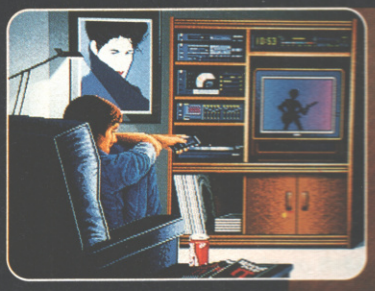
And here we are somewhere around level 25 of *Shoot Out*. If you think it looks a bit busy now, wait until you see it in a couple of minutes' time, when there's twice as much moving around on the screen as this...

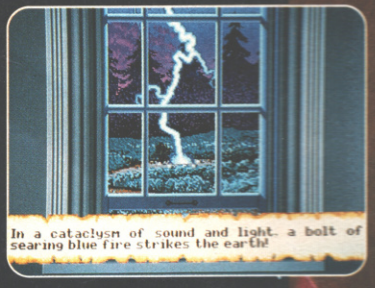
Okay, okay, so you can't play this if you're an A500P owner (well, you can but the colours are a bit psychedelic), but it takes up such a tiny amount of space on the disk (which would otherwise just have been left empty) so enough complaints already. Would you prefer it if we denied those thousands of old-style Amiga owners the chance of playing this classic Zen shoot-'em-up? Of course not. (Or if you would, then you're completely selfish and we're quite pleased that you're upset, actually.) Anyway, there's not really a lot to be said about this one. You control the little ship at the bottom of the screen, and all you have to do is shoot all the aliens which appear until your energy bar is completely exhausted by collisions with the alien craft. On level one you've got one enemy to blast, on level two there are two, on level three there are three, on level four (*Get on with it -Ed*), well, you get the idea. It's all ridiculously fast and furious, and the best any of us here have managed is the depths of level 48. This is the shoot-'em-up distilled down to its most elementary form, and it's fun. ●



Ultima VI

The False Prophet





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TRUE STORIES

SPOILT FOR CHOICE? YOU WILL BE...

Steve Franklin: a firm "no comment" from Commodore UK about the new Amiga range

Sources close to Commodore's US headquarters have revealed plans for three new versions of the Amiga – though whether any of them will actually go into production remains unclear. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the three new models is that none of them appear to be the keyboard-less 'console' version that has been rumoured for several months. Instead, the A300, A800 and A4000 – as they are known – simply widen the existing range of traditional Amiga computers. As the code numbers suggest, they range from a low-specification machine to a new top-of-the-range super-Amiga.

Commodore UK have refused to comment, but market conditions and the continuing rise of the Amiga make broadening the range to take in both the basic games machine and Apple Mac/PC markets a logical move.

The A300 will be based closely on the standard Amiga, but with a half meg of RAM, fewer expansion ports, and no numeric keypad. Suggestions that the keyboard could be dispensed with altogether – thus creating a console-like machine – seem to have been overturned in favour of more or less reproducing the performance of the original A500s.

The A800, on the other hand, is expected to utilise the superior Motorola 68020 processor, and include 16-bit (ie CD quality) sound as standard. It may well come bundled with a hard drive and a monitor, putting it firmly within the Archimedes/low-end Apple Mac class.

The A4000 will be the new top-of-the-range model, with a Motorola 68040 processor, 16-bit sound, and 24-bit graphics. This sort of specification sees the Amiga finally aiming itself at the workstation market – it'll be well outside the range of most gamesplayers, but could pioneer new technology that will eventually filter down to game playing Amiga owners.

The new models, should they actually see the light of day, will ensure the Amiga's the most versatile and price-effective home computer for quite some years yet. Imagine playing a 3D shoot-'em-up with CD-quality music and effects and over 16 million colours on the screen at once. Now that's definitely technology worth paying for!

24 bit graphics – a standard feature of forthcoming Amiga machines?

WAITER! THERE'S A FLOATER IN MY GAME!

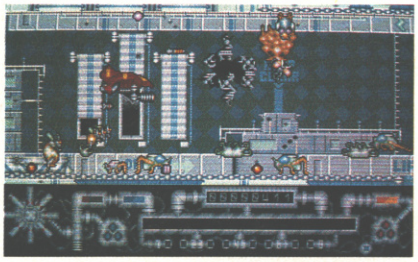
Fans of the classic *Bomber Man* game (last seen on the PC Engine, but also years earlier as the cult Spectrum title *Eric And The Floaters*) will probably be very surprised (what with the traditional reluctance of console developers to licence their products for home micros) to hear that it's to come to the Amiga. Details are a bit thin on the ground at the moment – all we really know for sure is that it'll be published by Ubi Soft and will cater for up to three players simultaneously. It's an odd little game but a brilliant one, so we'll be keeping a watchful eye on its progress in the coming months. More news as and when etc etc.

DAZE OF FRENCH THUNDER

***Legend Of The Fortress* – Silmarils continue their increasingly impressive line in original RPGs. This time a 3D first person perspective is used.**

Hot on the proverbial heels of *Storm Master* – the stunning new game from French publishers Silmarils through new importers Daze – comes *Ishar: Legend Of The Fortress*. An epic RPG – this season's most popular game type, it seems – *Ishar* has got the lot. With a 3D landscape system (reminiscent of *Lords Of Midnight* and *Crystals Of Arborea*) offering a possible 160,000 different views, there're 150 characters, real-time combat sequences, and – ooh – pretty much all the razzle dazzle things you'd expect of a state-of-the-art French role-playing epic. Hopefully we'll have a full review in about two months time.

A BREED APART



***Hostile Breed*, Palace's forthcoming combination of multi-screen strategy and shoot-'em-up. Space blasters may never seem quite the same again...**

Quiet throughout much of 1991, Palace are starting the year as they mean to go on – with a whole series of new games. First up is *Hostile Breed*, a strategic shoot-'em-up from Rob Stevens, whose previous credits include *Barbarian II*. Graphics duties are being handled by Jo Walker (creator of those distinctive stills in *Demoniak* and *Mega lo Mania*). Placed in charge of repair work on a space station, the player must divide time between different areas of the base, repairing sections using an army of repair robots, and using defence systems to halt the invasion of alien life forms. Perhaps the most intriguing feature is that the whole game world continues to function, even when the player is off doing something else in a completely different area of the map. Waste time, say, and the aliens will grow, reproduce and get up to untold mischief. Palace promise that *Hostile Breed* will "provide the jaded shoot-'em-up fan with a new twist to the genre". Well, the concept may not exactly be new – it was used in the Spectrum classic *Worse Things Happen At Sea* – but it ought to make a nice change from the endless torrent of second rate *R-Type* clones.

Then there's *Hot Rubber*, Palace's bike racer. Using a sprite-based 3D system and split screen, it seems to have more in common with the classic C64 game *Pitstop 2* than contemporaries such as *Lotus 2*. Dedicating itself to 12 international circuits, it misses out on some of the variation of track and landscape found in cross-country racers, but there's something about riding round simulations of real courses which can't be beat. Programmed by Microids, *Hot Rubber* is going to need a lot of speed and controllability to do well. (Particularly as Ubi Soft's impressive *Vroom* is also due for a March release).

WIN AN AMERICAN FOOTY SHIRT!

COMPETITION

To celebrate the dreamy brilliance of *John Madden's American Football*, those sporting people at Electronic Arts have kindly donated five top American footy shirts. If you think you've got the muscle to fill out one of these tasty pieces of kit, then simply follow these three magic steps.

1. Work a brilliant anagram out of JOHN MADDEN'S AMERICAN FOOTBALL

2. Write it down on the back of a postcard (or sealed envelope), along with your name and address.

3. Send it to No Sweat, AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2DL

The best five entrants will each receive a wonderfully hunky shirt as pictured above (girls please note, the guy is not included). The closing date for entries is 31st March 1992, and we regret that there's no choice of team or size.

I'M NOT A NUMBER, I'M A FREE TRANSFER

Football management games come and football management games go, more regularly than Tommy Docherty used to get sacked. The latest one looks just a little bit different, though. Domark's *Championship Manager* has been seven years in the making – ever since two programmers started writing it on an Amstrad 6128 in their bedroom for their own amusement, in fact. After friends said 'This is really great' and all that kind of stuff, they sent it off to the ever-benevolent Dom-Doms, who promptly signed the boys up on the spot to convert the game to the Amiga.

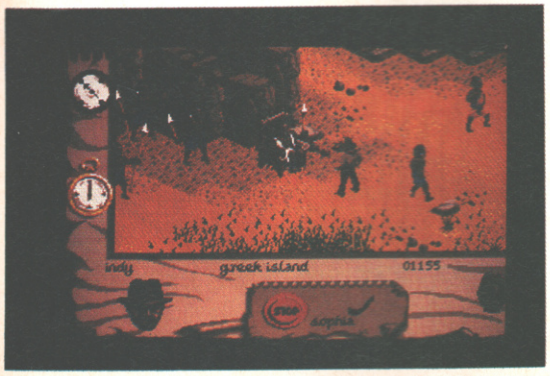
We've had a look at a still-quite-a-way-from-finished version (release is targeted for April), and it has to be said that this looks like being far and away the most comprehensive game of its type yet. Just about every conceivable factor in real-life footy management – from fining players for bad discipline to making sure the club physio has the right kind of personality – is included in a game of frightening depth, and although the lack of graphical match action is likely to limit the title's appeal to non-diehards, potential number-crunching Alex Fergusons will be in heaven. Look out for a proper review very soon.

More stats than you can shake a stick at.

GAME WITH NO DISK

On-line continue their support for the still rather eclectic CD-TV system, with *Town With No Name*. Quite obviously taking its cue from the arcade laser disc novelty *Mad Dog McCree*, it uses a mixture of recorded film, and computer-generated animation to deliver 'a vast

interactive cartoon feature'. The graphics certainly look kind of neat, but we've yet to see anybody make use of CD-TV *and* offer a decent game into the bargain. The game's author is ex-Speccy ace Fergus '*The Colour Of Magic*' McNeil however, and the price of the CD-TV system has just been reduced, so who knows? Commodore may make it with their 'multi-media' experience after all.



Where there's a whip there's a way. Indy and Sophia go Greek in search fabled underwater cities and the obligatory nasty Nazis.

I HATE SNAKES!

While we all wait for Lucasfilm's adventurish incarnation of *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, the programmers at Creative Materials are nearing completion on the *Indy Action Game*. Using a 3D isometric system, not only does the game give the player the chance to don the hat and wield the whip of Indy, there's the opportunity to wear the thigh boots and blouse of Sophia Hapgood too! All good, wholesome family entertainment, we're sure. Five distinct levels roughly follow the plot of the Fate Of Atlantis comic book, with Indy visiting casinos, stowing away in Nazi submarines and eventually reaching the fabled sunken city itself. Amiga owners should start growing that manly stubble and rolling around in desert dust in readiness for its release in the next month or two.

CRIB SHEETS

DOMARK

DOMARK

Contact: Domark, Ferry House, 51-57 Lacy Road, London SW15 1PR Tel. 081 7802222

History: Formed as a software publishing house in late 1983 by Mark Strachan and Dominic Wheatley, who met when working in an ad agency, and decided to go into business together. Kit Williams' Masquerade mystery book struck a chord with pair, so in 1985 they came up with a similar software concept called *Eureka*. A huge computer adventure game, Domark offered a cheque for £25,000 for the first person to prove they had completed the game. In 1987 an in-house development team, The Kremlin, was started up. Games developed include *Trivial Pursuit*, which has sold over 650000 copies to date .

People: Domark employ 50 full time staff – 15 at The Kremlin, who are directly involved in software development. Matthew Timms is publisher at the Kremlin while Russell Ferrier and Colin Boswell are each responsible in their own right for games development.

Greatest Success: In the opinion of Brynn Gilmore, Domark's Marketing Manager, "*Trivial Pursuit*, because it gave the company a monetary base which enabled it to grow. In fact, the game is still selling very, very steadily. We have just launched it onto the CDTV. Commodore think it's one of the best titles they've got." Last year Domark's turnover was £4.5 million – this time round it's likely to be nearer 10.

Greatest Failure: "Some of the titles we brought out ourselves," admits Gilmore. "*Friday 13th* in particular. It was very tacky indeed, and – despite being extremely well marketed – still sold next to nothing."

Typical Domark game: "There is no typical Domark game. We work with a changing strategy to match a changing market."

How do they see themselves: "As a constantly growing professional company. We do, without a shadow of a doubt, enjoy everything we do."

How other people see them: "The image has changed quite considerably over the years.Originally Dominic and Mark were seen as the 'upper class twits' of the industry, but that's mellowed into respect for what the company has achieved."

Product development: "Matthew Timms has been at Domark for two years as software publisher, the lynchpin, if you like, of the Domark products. He is responsible for assigning the development of the projects. He knows who's best and constantly monitors the process from storyboard to finished product with directors and producers. Software managers control each project. Projects are free to develop in their own way along the theme of the storyboard but there are guidelines which must be adhered to."

Final Word: "I can guarantee that the products you'll see in the forthcoming year from Domark will be unique, very playable and very enjoyable."

Mark Strachan (left) and Dominic Wheatley – "upper class twits" no more!

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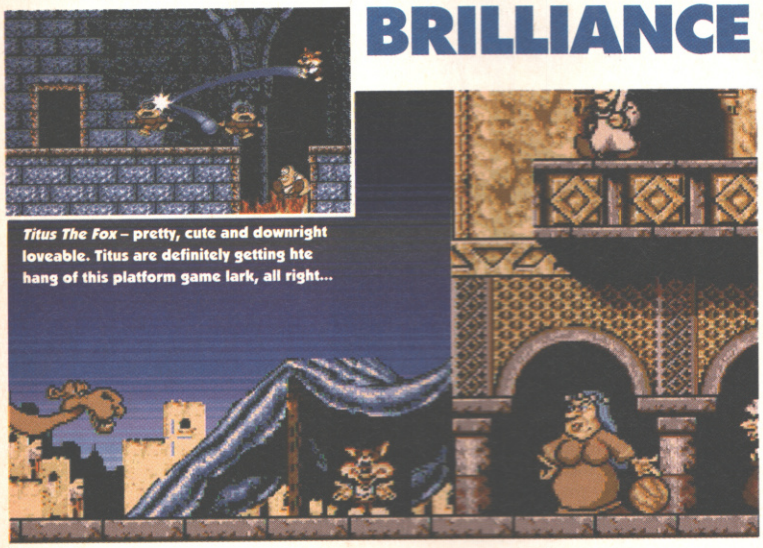


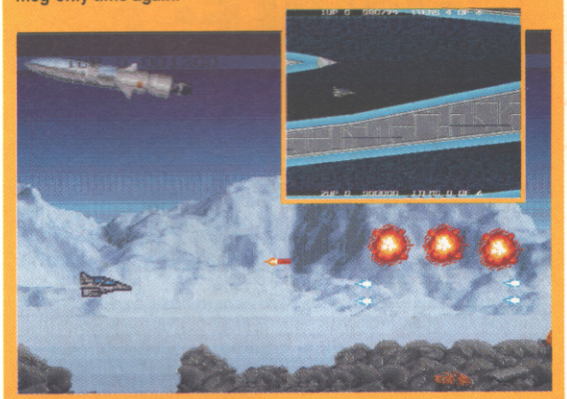
***Titus The Fox* – pretty, cute and downright loveable. Titus are definitely getting hte hang of this platform game lark, all right...**

Fans of Titus' excellent platform romp *The Blues Brothers* (which includes pretty much everyone here at AP) will be impossibly thrilled to hear of the imminent release of a sort-of sequel. *Titus The Fox* (for such is the game's name) is another platformer which shows lots of obvious similarities with the earlier title, but it's bigger, slicker, and more involved.

Not only that, but the eponymous hero looks like he could run away with the AMIGA POWER All-Comers' Cutest Computer Game Hero Ever title. A cheeky and lovable little chap (slightly reminiscent, in fact, of the wolf pups in Graftgold's forthcoming *Fire And Ice*), Titus races around 16 huge levels as he attempts to rescue his kidnapped babe, the appropriately-named Foxy. The game has already been released in France, where Joystick magazine awarded it an astonishing 97 percent, saying "It is definitely the new reference for all types of platform games", but it's being improved and tweaked for British release. Our favourite of the new additions, though, is a key which allows you to slow down the action to half-speed if it's all getting a bit too tough for you (or just for the odd particular precision leap), which Vincent from Titus cheekily dubs 'The *Magic Pockets* Option'...

MUTANT ALIEN SLIMEBALLS FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE

...is just one of the titles which would be an improvement on *Project X*, the latest release about to appear from the offices of Team 17, the commercial house which has, in fact, no connection whatsoever with top PD library 17 Bit Software. *Project X*, as we'll have to call it for now anyway, is a simple enough horizontally-scrolling *R-Type*-style shoot-'em-up, but it features some of the loveliest and fastest-moving graphics yet seen on the Amiga. With full-screen, 32-colour display and lots of other technical bits like that which are doubtless jolly hard to do, the game looks absolutely gorgeous, and on the sonics side it boasts a choice between a normal bangs-and-whizzes soundtrack or a 'rave dance track' written for the game by apparently-top Amiga muso Dr Awesome (also known as Bjorn Lynne). The most interesting feature on the rolling demo we've seen, though, is a superfast tunnel sequence bonus game which shows that the T17 boys are obviously big fans of the brilliant arcade and Mega Drive zapper *Air Busters* (aka *Aero Blasters*), which is good news as far as we're concerned here at AMIGA POWER. If *Project X* is anything like as good as that game is, and it looks as though it very well might be, it's going to be very good indeed. Find out for yourself around the beginning of March, but make sure you've got that memory expansion bought first – it's one meg-only time again.



***Project X* – lousy name, great game. The *Alien Breed* programmers are producing some of the most impressive zap games around right now.**

Oh dear...

It's another crap game/it really is quite old/ But at least this one's not/ by US(*Snip!-Ed*)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

(Activision)

***BTTFP2* – more dreary than bad**

Scene: A dark and cluttered Victorian mansion in the late 1870s.

"So, Dr Wells, tell me about your time machine"

"Well, it's like this. The machine takes an inanimate object and bombards it with super-dense sub-atomic particles, causing it to vibrate at a very specific speed. These vibrations set up a strange chain reaction within the molecules of the target object, causing the molecules to decay at a rate far in advance of the normal. However, the decay is a spatial rather than physical one, and hence the object passes forward through time only, its actual physical properties remaining completely unchanged."

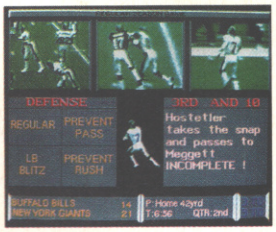
"But that's a ridiculous notion, Dr Wells! It contradicts everything we currently know about the laws of physics and relativity! I demand that you prove it to me!"

"Very well. Observe this highly primitive computer game, created by my good friend Dr Babbage to introduce his children to his revolutionary mathematical engine. The graphics are appalling, but the dismal sub-*Paperboy* gameplay is what truly defies the evidence of one's senses. I can bring myself to talk no more of it, but fix, if you will, your attention on it for a few seconds while I manipulate the controls of my device..."

"It...it...it's gone! It shimmered before my eyes and then completely disappeared! But how do I know it has actually passed into the future?"

"Ah. That, my dear Dr Fishpaste, is a question only your grandchildren will be able to answer..."

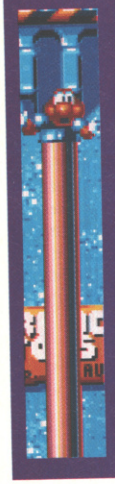
PUNT!



Best looking sports manager yet?

Now this could be interesting – American Football is at least half management strategy anyway, so creating a management game around it would seem like a fairly logical idea, and if digitised pictures from real life games accompanied the play it could even look interesting too! This seems to have been the thinking behind new Sunderland-based outfit Strike Force Design's *Touchdown!*, and it looks like they may just have pulled it off. The game is obviously aimed at the more fantatical American Football nut – the people for whom *John Madden's* (reviewed this issue) is just too limited. It allows you to play any NFL team over a 16-game season, with accurate player stats (for over 1000 players!), training options, trading between teams, and a realistic time element which forces you to retire even your best players after a certain number of seasons and recruit and train rookies to take their place. Released at the end of march on the Amiga, *Touchdown!* costs £14.95 and is mail order only. And here's a clever idea – if you're not quite sure that you'll like it, Strike Force operate a nifty try-before-you-buy scheme that gets you a cut-down game with limited graphics for only £2, money they take off the complete game price if you return the disk. For further information Strike Force Design are at 28 Noble Street, Hendon, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear SR2 8LU.

MILLENNIUM JOIN EA



Millennium (formerly Logotron Entertainment), creators of games like *James Pond*, *Kid Gloves*, *Robin Hood* and the recent *Robocod*, have cut ties with US Gold, who used to distribute their products, in favour of a world wide affiliated label deal with Electronic Arts. Thus Millennium join respected publishers and programming groups like Interplay, Three-Sixty, Broderbund, Mindcraft and Bullfrog in the EA fold.

The move will be particularly important as far as the massive US market is concerned – Millennium have never been properly represented there before – where new titles like *Global Effect* will get an airing. Just thought you'd like to know.

THE SQUAD IS BACK!

Fans of Julian Gollop's classic *Laser Squad* (number 25 in the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100 Games) who were a mite disappointed with *Lords Of Chaos* will be relieved to hear that *Laser Squad 2* is on its way. There's no details yet of how it improves over and differs from the original, but – hey! – the first game was a real stunner, and strategy games are definitely in vogue right now. Stay tuned, as they say, for more details as we receive them.

MIRRORSOFT ARE BACK OR: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Last month we detailed the end of Mirrorsoft as we know it, one more victim of the collapse of the Maxwell empire. The piece last month had a small 'stop press' attached – rumour had it that Acclaim, the US based software company, had bought the remanents, including the rights to most, if not all, of the games Mirrorsoft were to have published in 1992.

This month we can reveal that the rumour was definitely *true* – Acclaim, headed up in this country by ex-Activision Europe boss Rod Cousins, one of the industry's real veterans, is now running the company from their UK headquarters. Erstwhile Mirrorsoft boss Peter Bilotta has joined the new outfit, as has the old Mirrorsoft Marketing Manager and a number of other staff – the most obvious major Mirrorsoft player not involved being ex-Sales Director Sean Brennan, who has taken a similar job at Virgin.

Details of release schedules, what games they'll actually publish (and what labels they'll appear on) and so on are still unclear. The fact remains, however, that Mirrorsoft, in some form at any rate, is up and running again.

SENSIBLE: NEW HOME NEEDED!

One group of games that definitely *won't* be published by the revamped Mirrorsoft are those developed by Sensible Software, the team behind *Mega lo Mania*, perhaps the most impressive release that company had last year. Sensible have spent the Mirrorsoft fall out period making sure all rights to their games are firmly back with them – "The first *Mega lo Mania* is no longer a Mirrorsoft product, for instance, it's ours," says Sensible co-boss Jon Hare.

You can read more about some of Sensible's new games elsewhere in this issue , but here are a couple of those nearing (well, nearing-ish) completion and currently lacking a publisher. Who, we wonder, is going to give them a good home..?

SENSIBLE SOCCER
Kick Off 2 – watch your back!

Kick Off 2 (despite what our Stuart thinks of it) has had it too long at the top – or so Sensible think, anyway. Whatever name their new game is eventually released under – the lads seem keen to keep the 'Sensible' bit in there somewhere, even if it does eventually attract a *Jimmy White*-like sponsorship deal – it's intended to take the soccer game to places it's never been before. This is, of course, the second football game Sensible have tackled (the first was *MicroProse Soccer*) so hopefully they'll have learned a bit from the experience. Anyway, here are a few of the features '*Sensible Soccer*' has over *Kick Off 2*, as described by Jon Hare...

● Accurate passing
"This isn't a pinball game like *Kick Off*, it works more like real football. The computer assists in lining you up with the ball and then a simple tap on a button lets you pass. It's much more like the system in *Speedball 2*, which we far prefer."

● Smaller scale
"We've made the pitch and all the little men deliberately smaller – it helps when playing the game because you can actually see where you're going. At our scale there's no need for a scanner thing because you can see one corner or the side of the pitch nearly all the time, so you know roughly where the goal you're heading for is."

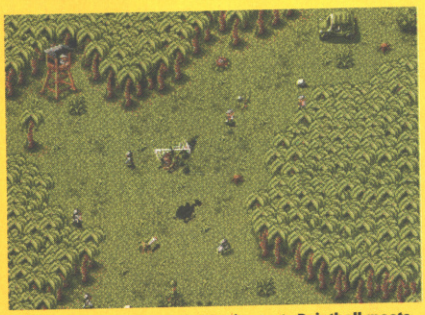
● More variety
"We've got black and white players, a team strip editor, changing pitch conditions, the ability to slide at the ball, which you couldn't do in *Kick Off*, the chance to play a long ball game (if you really want to) and so on. We've tried to make it as much like a real game of football as possible, basically."

● Better sound
"The extra disk with samples on worked so well in *Mega lo Mania* we're hoping to incorporate it into many of our games, including this one. I'm not exactly sure what's going to be on it yet though!"

CANNON FODDER
Lemmings with guns?

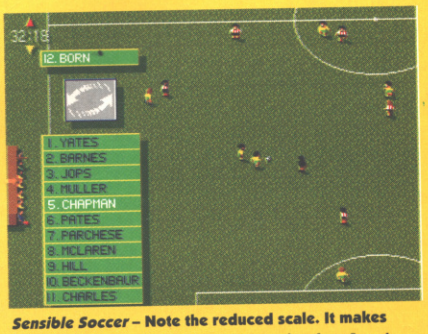
"Well, that's sort of what it's like," says Sensible's Jon Hare, "though when you first look at it you'll probably be reminded more of *Mega lo Mania*. It's a kind of strategy game, with little groups of people running around the map – it's much more tightly focussed in on a small group of people than *Mega lo Mania*, and the structure of the game actually comes across as more a sort of Paintball thing, with little groups of men running around the landscape trying to get at each other. The *Lemmings* connection comes from the fact that you don't control your men directly, but must tell them what to do and then watch them do it – whether they live or die can come down to whether you gave them decent instructions in the first place."

It's certainly an interesting concept for a game, and doesn't sound a million miles away from Bullfrog's long-awaited 'Bob'/*Higher Functions*. Look for a release towards the end of the year.



***Cannon Fodder – Mega lo Mania* meets Paintball meets *Lemmings* meets 'Bob'. Or something...**

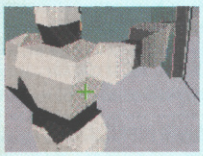
***Sensible Soccer – Mega lo Mania* meets *Kick Off* meets *MicroProse Soccer*. Erm, or *something*...**



***Sensible Soccer* – Note the reduced scale. It makes finding your way around the pitch easier than Anco's.**

AMIGA POWER RECOMMENDS

Time, once again, to sit down and think of the games we'd *really* recommend from the past couple of months. Games like this little lot, for instance...



ROBOCOP 3
(Ocean)

It's been a while since Ocean came up with anything original for a movie licence game, but *RoboCop 3* stunned us all with a spectacular drive/shoot/fly/beat-'em-up epic in solid polygon 3D. As far removed from the previous two *RoboCop* games as you could possibly imagine, and better than you could have hoped for – at last, a winner from Ocean.

LEANDER
(Psygnosis)

It looked as if Psygnosis' star was on the wane for a while, what with the lacklustre *Oh No! More Lemmings* and the downright dull *Barbarian 2*, but they've returned with a vengeance with this great console-esque platform game, featuring lushly-coloured graphics and imaginative and addictive hacking action inspired by Gremlin's wondrous *Switchblade II*. They're back. Back!

ANOTHER WORLD
(US Gold)

'Wow' was just about the only word we got out of Mark and Stuart last month, because they spent most of the time playing this gorgeous *Gold Of The Aztecs*-style arcade adventure and gaping at the animation, and imagination that characterised every last byte of it. Luckily the game's pretty short – it's only real fault – or we'd never have got any work out of them...

HEARTS OF CHINA
(Sierra)

Sierra have spent quite a while now chasing an adventure that would compete with the mighty *Secret Of Monkey Island*, but this is the first time they've really come close. A decent plot, absolutely lovely graphics, some nifty sub-games and a remarkably user-friendly interface more or less overcomes the over-linear nature of the game. Now if only they had some jokes...

CELTIC LEGENDS
(Ubi Soft)

Let's face it, however good we say this is you're not going to race out there in your thousands and buy it, so it's unlikely to achieve the chart success it deserves. But what are you missing? Accessible wargaming with a human edge, atmosphere, drama, imagination and humour – and some great bagpipe music too. More fool you.

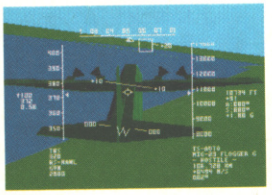
ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
(Respray)

And after all that, how about a good old-fashioned arcade game to relax your poor tortured mind? They don't come much simpler or much more enjoyable than this no-nonsense runaround shoot-'em-up – one of Domark's finer hours. Honest, unpretentious *fun* – remember that?

EA ARE SURPRISED – HOW COME BIRDS OF PREY'S ABOVE POPULOUS 2?

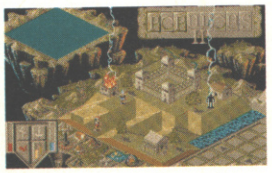
Birds Of Prey
(No 2)
Populous 2
(No 6)

EA are pleased at the success of *Birds Of Prey*, obviously, but at the same time rather puzzled. "The thing is, we know *Populous 2* is outselling *Birds Of Prey* in some places by a factor or two to one, and though that might not be the situation nationwide, the fact remains that *Populous* should be a lot higher," says Electronic Arts' Simon Jeffery. "It makes me



***Birds Of Prey* – performed well, but still not quite as well as...**

question the accuracy of the charts, to be honest – we're obviously pleased with the performace of *Birds*, that's been a big product for us – but *Populous 2* has been quite simply the biggest thing we've had in over a year. I'm actually quite disappointed with Amiga game players that they've made something like *WWF* the number one – there are obviously two distinct Amiga markets, the younger end who'll go for *WWF*



***...Populous 2*, which is actually outselling it nationwide (despite what Gallup might say).**

and the older people who'll buy *Populous 2* or *Birds*. I can't imagine many people would buy both sorts of prooduct!"

Indeed not. Going back to *Birds Of Prey*, we weren't sure how well it'd do on the Amiga.

"Why, because of the speed? Yes, that is a problem on the Amiga – the thing is the game isn't really so much a flight sim like *Falcon* or something as a strategy war game with 3D flight in it. The flying bits work much better on PCs – that can handle both the wargame side and the flying side better than the Amiga."

AMIGA POWER GALLUP CHARTS

AMIGA TOP 100

····· Exceptional ····· Nearly there ···· Very good ··· Has its moments ·· Flawed · Dire

1 (1) WWF WRESTLEMANIA Ocean £25.99 **
2 (8) BIRDS OF PREY Electronic Arts £34.99 ****
3 (6) ROBOCOP 3 Ocean £25.99 ****
4 (5) JAMES POND 2 – ROBOCOD Millennium £25.99 ****
5 (10) NEW ZEALAND STORY Hit Squad £7.99 *****
6 (2) POPULOUS 2 Elèctronic Arts £29.99 *****
7 (7) LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2 Gremlin Graphics £25.99 *****
8 (15) SCOOBY DOO AND SCRAPPY DOO Hi-Tec £7.99 *****
9 (NE) FIRST DIVISION MANAGER Code Masters £7.99 ***
10 (9) JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER Virgin £29.99 *****

11 (11) BUBBLE BOBBLE Hit Squad £7.99 ****
12 (13) LOMBARD RAC RALLY Hit Squad £7.99 ***
13 (12) LEANDER Psygnosis £25.99 ****
14 (37) MICROPROSE GOLF MicroProse £29.99 ****
15 (NE) ANOTHER WORLD Delphine/US Gold £25.99 *****
16 (4) HEIMDALL Core Design £34.99 ****
17 (57) ROBOCOP Hit Squad £7.99 ****
18 (97) INTERNATIONAL NINJA RABBITS Micro Value £7.99 ***
19 (25) WACKY RACES Hi-Tec £7.99 **
20 (73) WORLD CRICKET Zeppelin £7.99 ***
21 (20) BATMAN THE MOVIE Hit Squad £7.99 ***
22 (39) MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE Krisalis £25.99*****
23 (21) RETURN TO EUROPE Anco £7.99 **
24 (NE) RICK DANGEROUS Kixx £7.99 **
25 (30) FANTASY WORLD DIZZY Code Masters £6.99 ****
26 (26) DIZZY COLLECTION Code Masters £24.99 ****
27 (34) DOUBLE DRAGON 2 Tronix £9.99 ***
28 (22) TERMINATOR 2 Ocean £25.99 **
29 (23) CHASE HQ Hit Squad £7.99 *
30 (19) FIRST SAMURAI Image Works £29.99 *****
31 (17) ALIEN BREED Team 17 £24.99 ***
32 (96) THE GODFATHER US Gold £30.99 ***
33 (NE) NINJA COLLECTION Ocean £19.99 *
34 (29) PGA TOUR GOLF Electronic Arts £25.99 *****
35 (31) ALTERED BEAST Hit Squad £7.99 **
36 (33) HEAD OVER HEELS Hit Squad £7.99 *****
37 (NE) FOOTBALL CRAZY CHALLENGE Anco £25.99 **
38 (16) SHADOW OF THE BEAST Sizzlers £7.99 **
39 (41) BATTLE ISLE Ubi Soft £30.99 ****
40 (46) SOCCER STARS COMPILATION Empire £25.99 ***
41 (47) KNIGHTMARE Mindscape £30.99 ***
42 (27) DRAGON NINJA Hit Squad £7.99 *
43 (44) PRO BOXING Code Masters £7.99 *
44 (63) X-OUT Kixx £7.99 **
45 (23) TURRICAN Kixx £7.99 ***
46 (NE) 4 WHEEL DRIVE COMPILATION Gremlin Graphics £29.99 ***
47 (NE) BOARD GENIUS Beau Jolly £29.99 ****
48 (74) FUN SCHOOL 4 (5-7) Europress £24.99**
49 (14) OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS (DATA DISK) Psygnosis £19.99 ***
50 (50) POPULOUS Star Performers £10.99 ****
51 (38) FUN SCHOOL 4 (7-11) Europress £24.99**
52 (33) NINJA RABBITS Micro Value £7.99 **
53 (78) RENEGADE Hit Squad £7.99 ***
54 (NE) SECONDS OUT Pocket Power £2.99 **
55 (3) THE SIMPSONS Ocean £25.99 ***
56 (52) TIP OFF Anco £25.99 **
57 (NE) STUNT CAR RACER Kixx £7.99 ****
58 (NE) GHOULS'N'GHOSTS Kixx £7.99 ***
59 (36) MONKEY ISLAND US Gold £25.99 *****
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61 (24) MEGA LO MANIA Image Works £29.99 *****
62 (NE) ICE HOCKEY Pocket Power £2.99 **
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64 (56) MOONSTONE Mindscape £29.99 ***
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66 (RE) LINE OF FIRE US Gold £24.99 **
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69 (45) TURRICAN Kixx £7.99 **
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84 (79) EYE OF THE BEHOLDER US Gold £30.99 *****
85 (53) RUGBY THE WORLD CUP Domark £25.99 **
86 (55) POWER DRIFT Hit Squad £7.99 ***
87 (76) CABAL Hit Squad £7.99 ****
88 (87) THUNDERHAWK Core Design £30.99 ****
89 (70) THE RAINBOW COLLECTION Ocean £19.99 *****
90 (NE) SUPER SKI Pocket Power £2.99 **
91 (NE) CELTIC LEGENDS Ubi Soft £30.99 *****
92 (NE) FROST BYTE Pocket Power £2.99 ***
93 (65) MAGIC POCKETS Renegade £25.99 **
94 (77) WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD Kixx £7.99 ****
95 (NE) RED HEAT Hit Squad £7.99 *
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97 (88) SUPER SPACE INVADERS Domark £25.99 **
98 (82) NORTH AND SOUTH Action Sixteen £7.99 ***
99 (83) SMASH TV Ocean £25.99 ***
100 (NE) AIR LAND SEA Electronic Arts £34.99 ***

We figure you must have some idea how the charts work by now, so briefly: they're put together by Gallup, they mix budgies and full pricers together, games are rated in stars, and they're © ELSPA.

ZEPPELIN'S CRICKET EPIC SCORES A FOUR

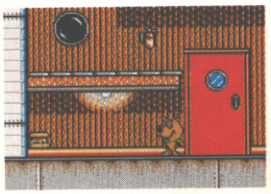
World Cricket
(No 20)

Zeppelin are obviously "very pleased" with their *World Cricket*. As their Head of Development, Gareth Briggs, told us "*World Soccer* did very well for us, and we hoped *World Cricket* – with the same control system – would do the same. We've got plans to continue the series with other popular sports, but we'd like to keep what they are under wraps at moment. With *Cricket*, the Spectrum version, which we released in October, went straight to No 1 in that chart, so we had high hopes for the Amiga. We haven't ruled out a *World Cricket 2*, you know!" Or, as he says, any other games. We await the release of *World Synchronised Swimming* with bated breath...

WE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO 1 IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU MEDDLING KIDS...

Scooby Doo And Scrappy Doo
(No 8)

You meddling kids who foolishly went and bought *WWF*, that is. When we called Hi-Tec's Sales Manager Terry Jeffries he had this



***Scooby And Scrappy* – could quite easily have been released at full price! (Lucky escape, eh viewers?)**

to say about the continuing rise of the game we called 'The best original budget game ever': "I think the reason *Scooby And Scrappy* is doing so well is mainly because of the game's content – it really is massive. It's reversed the usual budget game trend of a high entry followed by a fairly speedy tailing-off – having come in fairly low and steadily climbed up over several months – and I think it's going to hang around for a long time to come. We had actually thought of releasing the game at full price, and I believe it would definitely have done just as well at the higher point. Indeed, our next cartoon conversion, *The Jetsons*, is out on our new Premium label at a £12.99 price point, and it's already gone straight in at No 23 in this week's Gallup full-price chart." ●

Look out - he's back!

PAPERBOY 2

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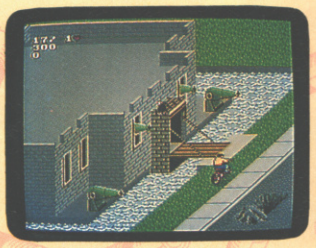

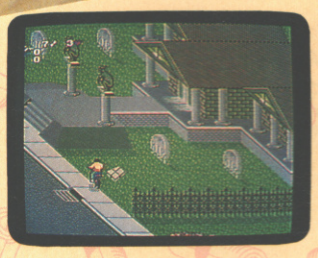

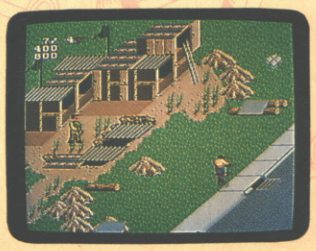

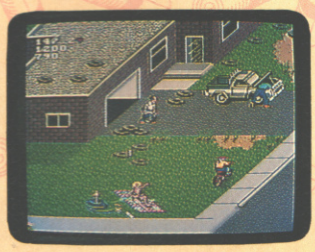

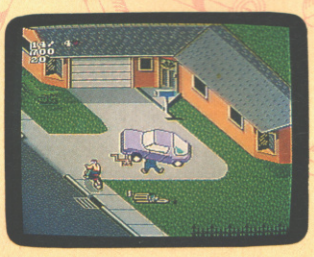

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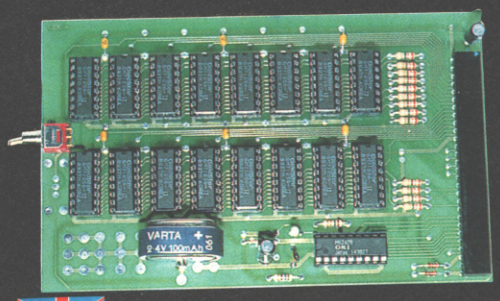

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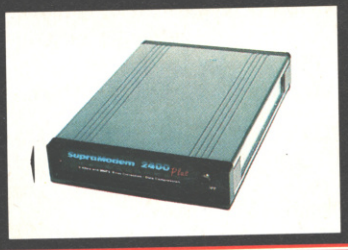

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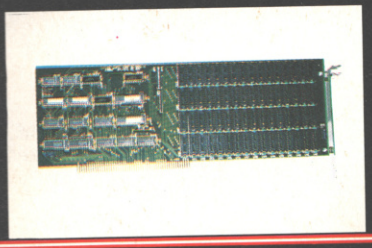

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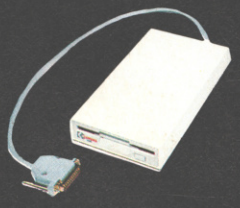

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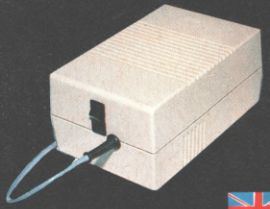

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JUST WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

MATT BIELBY

There's nothing the Ed likes better than to nip over to the Alps for a spot of posing in the desperate hope of catching some poor girl's attention. It came as no surprise, then, to find him skiving off for a holiday on the piste this month. Still, it meant no Harry Connick for a week...

Matt's been wearing: A pair of skis, various jumpers he got for Christmas

LISA NICHOLLS

Having settled into her 'wonderful' new flat, Lisa's decided to move. The girl is never happy. But it at least it gave the rest of the team an excuse to go and visit her for a 'flat leaving' party. It's been a 'delicate' month in the AMIGA POWER office since then, and no mistake...

Lisa's been wearing: Her usual Joker-esque grin and various pairs of trousers

MARK RAMSHAW

Less Bill & Ted from Mark this month, but he's been exhibiting signs of growing megalomania. As well as refusing to make the tea and shouting, "Onwards, upwards, bigger, better, more," without warning, he's been seen in a buttoned(!) shirt and has even washed his jeans!

Mark's been wearing: His traditional heavy-metal-satanist-Geordie pendant

NEIL WEST

American football – it's a funny old game. But our Neil loves it. He knows how to scrum his lineouts, and when to shout out numbers for no apparent reason. The Superbowl was heaven for Neil, but you can imagine his disdain when we asked who scored the most tries...

Neil's been wearing: His AMIGA POWER sweatshirt with pride

STUART CAMPBELL

Stuart's still reeling after seeing his hero Jerry Sadowitz metamorphose into his other hero, Wile E. Coyote, on BBC2 recently. "The world's best stand-up comedian and the world's best fall-down comedian in one," he gasped in awe, before playing his new Cramps LP. Again.

Stuart's been wearing: His shiny new Doc Martens and THAT stringy mohair jumper

JONATHAN DAVIES

Jonathan's got off to a flying start with The Last Resort, his new tips Q&A clinic. (Poor old Gary just wasn't up to the strain, so we called Dr Jon, the man with the number of a friend who might just know the man with the plan, to take over.) If you've got a problem, JD's your man.

Jonathan's been wearing: Man At C&A clothes and some sensible shoes

RICH PELLEY

Pelley keeps complaining that we've painted him as some kind of mad, rave-addicted ladies' man. But it's true! He insists that his life as a student (he's currently doing Chemistry, Maths, and Art A-levels) is much more important. Sorry Rich, but we know what a party dude you are.

Rich has been wearing: Baggy trousers and a floppy fringe, of course

MATTHEW SQUIRES

Newie Matthew's been learning how to con other people into making the tea, and getting the hang of playing a game while typing the review and answering the phone, all at the same time. Matthew's shady past with Bananarama has been revealed too. The tart.

Matthew's been wearing: His groovy '50s overcoat and a hangover

GARY PENN

Life's a bed of roses for Mr Penn. Or perhaps it's just a bed. But he's not getting any younger. Which was why we let him review old man's game *Black Crypt* (snigger). Gazza's new outlook on life is apparently based on Winnie The Pooh (no, really). David Icke, watch out!

Gary's been wearing: His heart on his sleeve and a look of a satisfaction on his face

KARL FOSTER

Karl's been 'sampling' US toilet humour this month, and it's left a bitter taste in his mouth. He now seems to hate the entire US of A, especially anyone called Larry. But – hey! – we suspect Karl's a leisure suit kind of guy at heart really.

Karl's been wearing: a pair of jeans which once belonged to a mental patient (he claims)

AMANDA COOK

Amanda's hit the big 23 this month, but as the second youngest in the team she needn't worry too much. (The Ed might look spritely, but he's pushing 40.) She also found time to ski a bit, in the company of ex-Domark girl Clare Edgeley (safely away from Matt, though).

Amanda's been wearing: A Game Gear (whenever possible) in her bum-bag

DAVE GOLDER

It's Dave's first time on AP, so we thought we'd ask him how it felt to be joining such an illustrious mag. "It's almost as good as having Doctor Who coming back on TV," he told us. Hmm. We're not *entirely* sure if that means he's happy or not, to be perfectly honest with you.

Dave's been wearing: a home-made *Psycho* t-shirt, vile green baseball boots, his grin

GAMES

***Storm Master* – Gallic excellence**

It's been another month of epic multi-disk fantasy games clogging up the AMIGA POWER disk drives – seems everybody's got the RPG bug at the moment. (Even Domark are getting in on the dungeoneering act!) From the incredible French offering *Storm Master* – a top multi-part strategy kind of thing – to the Hungarian *Abandoned Places* (possibly the biggest role-playing game we've ever seen) this month sees a distinctly international slant on things too. Luckily, EA's stunning conversion of Mega Drive success *John Madden's American Football* and Gremlin's glorious *Harlequin* keep the more arcadey end up (as it were). In the smaller reviews sections it's not all so shiny and happy though – find out just what we think of *Top Banana, Crime City* and other unmentionables on page 72. Oh yes, it's all here...

***Videokid* – Gremlin with another cutie**

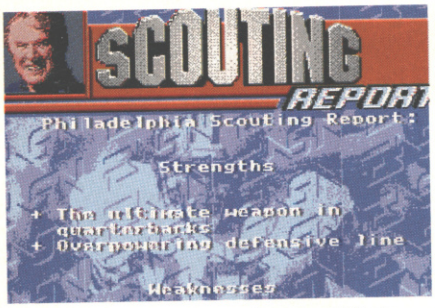
THE AMIGA POWER SCORING SYSTEM (AND HOW IT WORKS): AN EASY-TO-USE BEGINNERS GUIDE

The AMIGA POWER reviewing philosphy is an absolute doddle to understand. Really, it's simple. But hey, some of you are reading this bit, so you must be at least a *mite* confused. Here, then, is a brief run-down on the ins and outs of it, layman style.

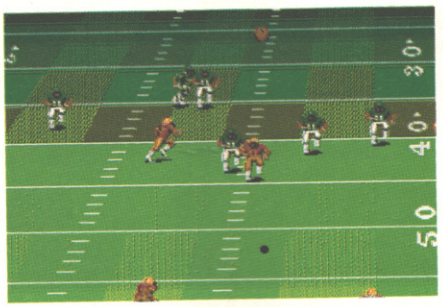
1) We're painfully aware of how much software costs, which is why we believe a game has to be *really* good to be worth buying – *or* worth giving a good mark. Happily, there's more than enough worthwhile stuff around if only you can find it – pointing you in the right direction is one reason AMIGA POWER exists. That's why we mark as hard as we do – we believe it's the only way to tell you if a game's worth buying...

2) We believe rating systems should be simple and easy to understand. That's why we just give one mark out of 100, a few summing up sentences, and that's it. Who wants more?

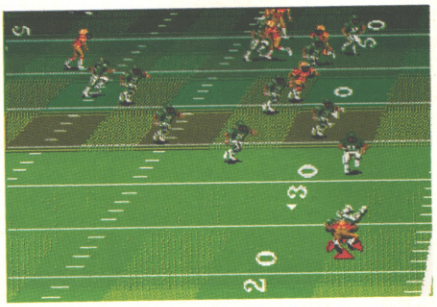
3) What, a third point? Get outta this blue box thang!



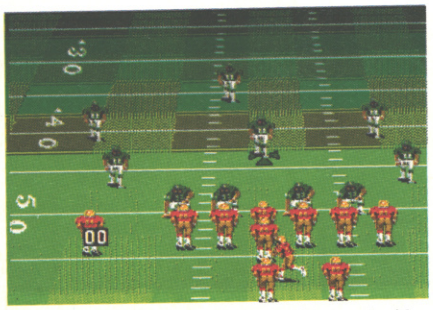
The game featured over the next 12 grabs – Philly are visiting San Francisco. John Madden gives the low-down.



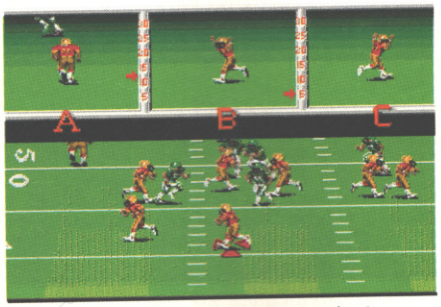
Philadelphia's kicker opens the proceedings. San Francisco's team block the charging Philadelphians.



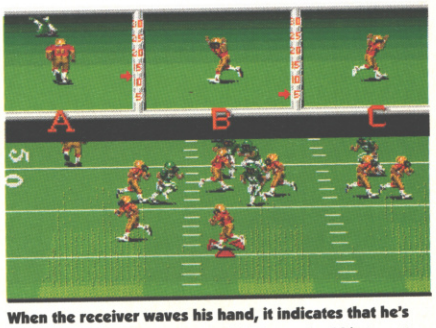
It is possible to return the kick-off back for a touchdown, but here the returner is pile-drivered into the turf.



Only after the players have lined up for the snap do either team get a decent idea of what the other's planned.



After the snap, all hell breaks lose. San Francisco's quarterback (that's you!) calls up his three receivers.



When the receiver waves his hand, it indicates that he's ready. Don't chuck the ball until he's reached his target.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

Game: John Madden Football
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Author: Park Place Production Team. Amiga programming by Gary Roberts
Price: £25.99
Release: 20th March

Let's get one thing straight from the very beginning. *John Madden Football* on the Mega Drive is in my opinion probably the best computer game ever written. This, then, is for my money the most eagerly awaited Amiga release of the year. Does that make me biased? Maybe, but if EA have in any way failed to maximise the potential of this version then rest assured I'll let you know.

That's that off my chest – now let me introduce you to a man called John Madden and his American Football game. John Madden is one of the big footy commentators in the states (like Jimmy Hill, but infinitely more hip). But his biggest claim to fame is having coached the Oakland Raiders to a Superbowl victory years ago.

The game itself is also an award winner, having been voted 'video game of the year' at the 1990 InDin awards – a prize perhaps less high-profile than a Superbowl victory, but more relevant to our concerns. This is the game that took the Mega Drive owning world by storm (before a certain blue and white spikey speed-merchant started hedge-hogging the limelight) and is now the first major Sega console game to be converted to home computer format. So let's take a look and see what's what...

"The best American Football game ever"

First stop, the options screen. If there's two of you, you can play head-to-head. Alternatively, chose to field any one of 17 football teams in either a regular season game, the first round of play-offs or a sudden death first-person-to-score grudge match against the computer.

Although you won't recognize the names as genuine NFL teams, each is unique. Although you only ever see 11 men from each team on the pitch at any one time, the squad consists of 45 individual players – each with his own particular strengths and weaknesses. These are reflected in a complete catalogue of player stats which are not only used as input data for the game's copy protection scheme, but combine to shape and mould the abilities, potential and peculiarities of each particular team.

It is in this way that you can tailor the difficulty of playing *John Madden Football*. Start off by representing a San Francisco or New York collection of hard nuts against a weaker team such as the (quite frankly, weedy) boys from Kansas City. You could even elect to field the All Madden team – a practically unbeatable, rootin' tootin', run-and-shootin', jock-strappin' posse of superheroes if ever there was one. Then, once you feel confident enough, play more evenly matched games.

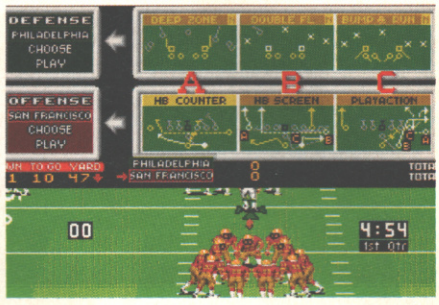
PLAY AWAY, OR EVEN AT HOME

Now choose if you want your elected team to play home or away, inside under a dome or in the open air, on grass or astroturf, in fair weather, rain and mud or snow and ice. All these options will effect the ensuing game. Players will speed up or slow down – in ice or mud a running game becomes more difficult – and so on. Finally (after a brief character assassination of each team by a digitised image of John Madden himself)

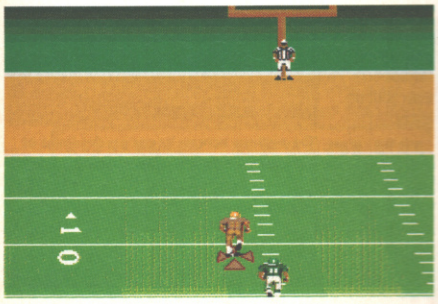
It may still be something of a minority interest, but the arrival of *John Madden*

San Francisco have driven the ball to the 47 yard line. It's first down, so there's room to try something adventurous.

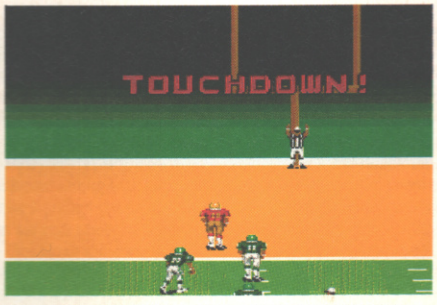
Still in the huddle, the offence scroll through the lists of formations while defence have to guess what's coming.



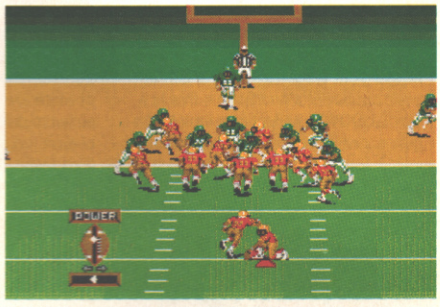
Offence have elected to field a 'Fast' team in a 'Near' formation – now select from the six play options open.



The pass – a glorious long-bomb, masked by calling a screen-play – sails straight over the defense.

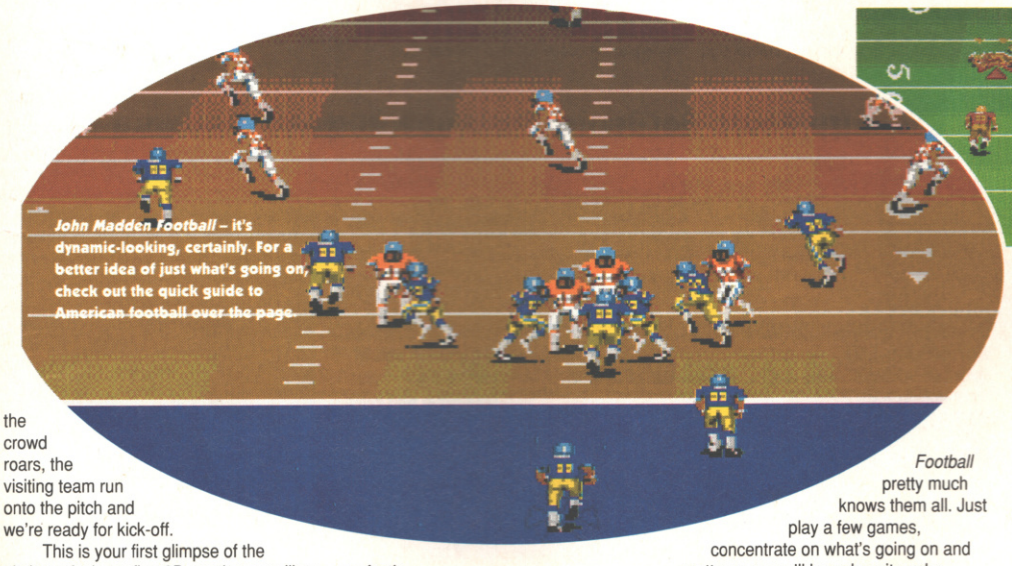


After running the ball in to the endzone for a 53 yard touchdown, the receiver struts his stuff in under the posts.

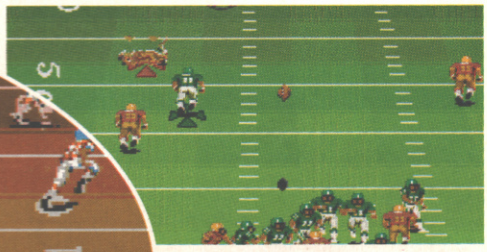


The teams re-form for the extra-point conversion. Philadelphia have little chance of blocking it.

ADDEN



John Madden Football – it's dynamic-looking, certainly. For a better idea of just what's going on, check out the quick guide to American football over the page.



(Above) The guy you're currently controlling is the dude with the cross under his feat (the one about to get hit by the ball).

the crowd roars, the visiting team run onto the pitch and we're ready for kick-off.

This is your first glimpse of the pitch, and what a fine 3D rotating, scrolling spectacle it is too. A whistle blows, the visiting team's kicker runs up to the ball and wellies it down the pitch…

It is at this point that all hell breaks lose and (unfortunately) we're going have to divide into two groups – those who already understand American Football perfectly, and those who haven't got the foggiest idea what those ridiculous Yanks have got against good old-fashioned rugger anyway.

There's no space really to explain all the rules and technicalities of the game, but suffice to say that *John Madden Football* pretty much knows them all. Just play a few games, concentrate on what's going on and pretty soon you'll learn how it works yourself.

Actually, there's a better idea – for the first few goes leave your joystick or keyboard (you can choose your control method at the start of the game) well alone and let the computer play for you. Whether on offence or defence, if you don't make a choice of play within a time limit the computer will make your choice for you, then execute the moves with calculated efficiency – albeit with a distinct lack of any 'Oh my God, what the hell's going on?' sort of flamboyancy.

When you feel confident enough, you can start calling your own plays. You can then either join in the proceedings or (once again) let the computer do all the dirty work for you.

GET MADDEN, THEN GET EVEN

While on offence, you start off playing the part of quarterback – you call the plays. Then, as soon as the action starts, you're put in direct →

***Football* could be just the thing to have us all talking touchdowns in no time...**

WHAT ARE THOSE AMERICANS DOING?

Although it may seem ridiculously complicated, American Football is one of the simplest games around – the jargon's what puts people off. Sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...

The END ZONE is the area behind the goal lines. Both teams have got one. The object of the whole game is to have one of your team holding the ball in your opponent's end zone – this is a TOUCHDOWN. At any one time in the game, one team will be attacking and one defending. The attacking team is called the OFFENSIVE team. They will try to work the ball towards the DEFENSIVE team's endzone.

The ball is moved about in PLAYS. The play starts by both teams facing off at the line of scrimmage – at a point level with wherever the ball finished up at the end of the last play. When the QUARTERBACK of the offensive team calls for the SNAP, he is passed the ball and he can do one of three things. Firstly, he can pass the ball to one of his team-mates to run with – this is a RUNNING PLAY. Secondly, he could chuck the ball up the pitch to a team-mate – this is a PASSING PLAY. Or he could RUSH (run) with the ball himself.

The offensive team is allowed four DOWNS (plays) to get the ball a total of ten yards up the pitch. So first down and ten means that it's the team's first play, and that they still have ten yards to go.

If they manage to gain ten yards, then they're allowed another four goes to get the ball a further ten yards – and so on, until they either score a touchdown or they fail to make the ten yards. On fourth (hence, last) down, unless a field goal is possible the offensive team will PUNT the ball as far up the pitch as they can. They lose possession, but have gained a lot of territory. The teams swap roles, and the ball starts moving back down the pitch. There's a lot more to it, but that's the basics.

The three receivers are called up, each is displayed in his box along the top of the screen, like so.

control of whoever gets the ball. You can dive, spin or run around in circles – it's up to you. As with the play-selection sequences, you can choose to adopt a hands-off stance and let the computer get on with it itself if you'd rather.

But firstly, you must decide on a plan for the play. Facing up the pitch (*John Madden Football* always offers you a nice view of the quarterback's pert behind), once you've decided what you want to do (based on a quick study of the current state of the game, your team's strengths and your opponent's weaknesses) you're given control of three variables.

THE NEW LEADER IN ITS FIELD

First off, you have to decide which set of players you want on the field. There are six different sets (two of which are 'special' kicking teams), each suited to different plays. The favoured set of guys run onto the pitch, and you must then select one formation (from a possible five) for them to move into at the line of scrimmage. Again, some formations favour running plays, some passing. Some offer the quarterback plenty of protection – allowing him a few more precious seconds of time to decide what he wants to do after the snap – while others offer different benefits. There are plenty of variations.

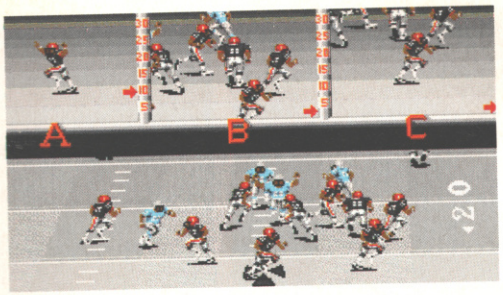
Lastly, you must select a play from the six on offer. All with fancy names such as 'Down And Out', 'Cross Pass' or 'Half Back Screen', there will be a mixture of running and passing plays, weighted in favour of whatever suits the selected formation best. The players move into positions, a voice calls "set" and it's time to see if all your careful planning yields any benefits.

I SHALL SAY THIS ONLY ONCE

Sounds complicated? Don't worry – you'll soon get the hang of it. But what it does boil down to is a huge selection of 120 (four sets, each with five possible formations, in turn with its own selection of six plays) combinations at your disposal. But even then your options are still open. You have the choice of rushing with the quarterback, calling an 'audible' (abandoning your planned play and running with a pre-defined set play) or whatever – not forgetting the decision to be taken on which of your three receivers you're going to pass to.

Sounds a lot? We haven't even talked about punts, field-goals, on-side kicks, time-outs, fumbles, interceptions, touchbacks or conversions yet...

While in defence, you're faced with an equally daunting array of options and possibilities. Experimentation is the only way to learn what works and what doesn't. You can decide which player to control before the snap (the player you control is standing on a cross so you can recognize him – even with his helmet on), and then swap to controlling whoever's in the thick of the action once the action starts.



Selecting strategies for a winter game, the players sprint over the snow-covered pitch. The top half of the action screen cuts away to show the strategy selection screen.

If your opponent's quarterback manages to get a pass away, then a tap of the fire button swaps your control to the player nearest your opponent's receiver. You can then jump to intercept or bat down the ball or tackle the receiver (but be careful not to get penalised for pass interference).

So is this Amiga version of my precious fave game the classic conversion I was so dearly hoping it was going to be? I'm pleased to say that the answer is yes. The graphics are excellent – although there is occasionally slight slow-down – and the sound effects and sampled speech are as good as anything else I've ever heard. But, perhaps most importantly, the tricky job of maintaining the game's controllability while switching from a three-button joypad to a one-button joystick has been handled as if it were never going to be a problem.

A QUESTION OF GAME TACTICS

But still, the real hook is the game underneath the gloss – there's just so much here. If all the options, decisions, choices and permutations that I attempted to outline earlier sound daunting, then take it merely as an indication of *John Madden Football*'s colossal depth. I played the Mega Drive version of this game solidly for around six months – and still came nowhere near to exploring everything that there was on offer. Practise playing against the computer with one particular team and you'll soon find yourself able to beat all the opposition with ease. But then start fielding a different team (with different strengths and weaknesses) and you'll find yourself back to square one.

"The most eagerly awaited release this year"

Better still, play against a human opponent. There are so many routes of discovery, so much scope for developing your own individual style of play, that no two people will ever find themselves having taken the same path to mastering the game. Hence no two players will ever (ever) find themselves not surprising (and in turn being surprised) with or by the plays and tactics that the other regarded as standard stuff.

Surely there has never been a game that demands so much of the player, in terms of both hands-on, adrenalin-pumping, pure arcade action and strategical thinking (don't underestimate this – third and two, three points behind, on the six yard line with 20 seconds on the clock with no time outs remaining is nothing less than a situation of grandmaster chess complexity).

The options screen keeps up the level of slickness set by the main action screens.

That this is the Amiga's best ever American Football game ever is without question – I'm talking about higher stakes. For my money, and I'll accept that different people like different things, this game offers more than anything else I've ever seen. *John Madden Football* is quite possibly the most complete Amiga game you'll ever have the joy of playing.

● *NEIL WEST*

UPPERS Superb graphics and sound are merely icing on the cake of a game that could possibly last you a lifetime. There's simply so much to explore and experiment with as your skills develop, playing against a human opponent will make every other two-player game you ever played seem shallow by comparison.

DOWNERS The computer opponents soon prove to be a walkover, so in the long-run you'll find enjoyment limited to two-player action. *John Madden '92* (the sequel) recently released on the Mega Drive offers more, but to criticise this Amiga version for lacking an up-grade's improvements seems facetious.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A near-perfect conversion of 1990's 'videogame of the year', with the only tweaks designed to improve on an already classic game. Two-player action is the key to unlocking this game's huge potential, so play with a partner. Graphically superb with glorious sound, *John Madden Football* looks as good as it plays.

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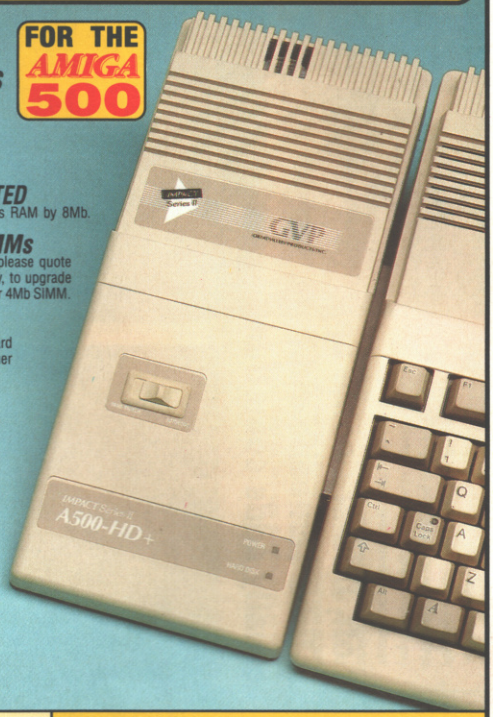

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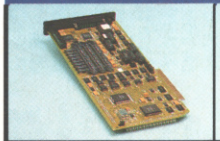

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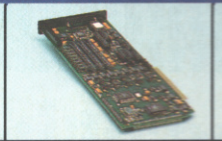

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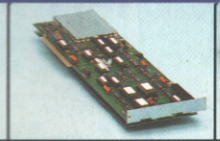

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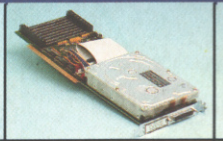

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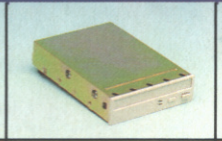

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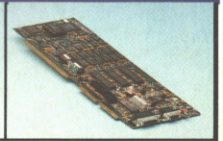

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SHADOWLANDS

Game: Shadowlands
Publisher: Domark
Price: £29.99
Author: Teque
Release: 18th March

Picking up the reins where *Hero Quest* left off, Domark come up with a remarkably successful beginner's RPG. And – it's about time someone did it – in its 'Photoscape' light-and-darkness system actually adds something new to the genre.

MORE FACES THAN FU MANCHU

Plastic surgery the easy way

Let's create some faces, and see just how ugly we can go. First up is Julian (or 'Jaz'), a geezer with a crazy hairstyle.

Not ugly enough, eh? Okay, try this – Baldieman. He's just what you'd expect, though perhaps too Sean Connery-esque in his white beard.

Let's take Sean above and bung on a toupee and a nose-job. Voila! Instant wise-older-man type of the party. Now let's try some of the others.

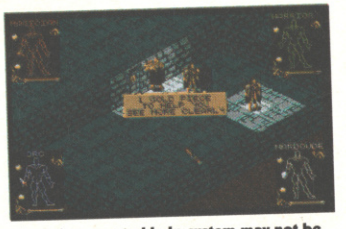
Hmm. The Blank is a bit too minimalist and mysterious looking for me. Not the kind of guy I want in my group of adventurers at all. Next!

Ah, now this is it – Super Japanese Console Man. With his slick hairdo, big blue eyes and pointed face, he's straight out of Marine Boy.

Anybody remember

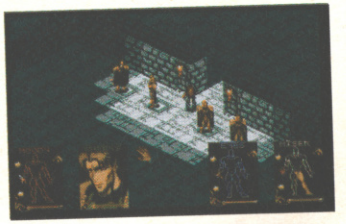
Nyctophobiacs beware! The powers of light and darkness pervade every nook and cranny of Domark's new fantasy epic. From the way day and night take their turn above ground to the murky depiction of underground passages, *Shadowlands* is by turns a light-saturated or a visibility-free zone. Torches cast pools of light. Opened doors allow streams of light to fall into adjacent rooms, and the absence of light wreaths everything in uncertainty. It's a Nice Touch alright, but let's be honest – a program which simulated the effects of light and did little else wouldn't be too thrilling. Which is why *Shadowlands* gives you a 3D isometric, mouse-driven, bells-and-whistles role-playing game into the bargain. (Mmmm, I wonder if I could program my word-processor to add the words 'role-playing' into every other review?)

This screen allows manipulation of a characters objects, party formations to be pre-defined, and the game to be saved or restored. Characters can also told to eat or sleep, or pass objects between themselves (if they are close by). The scales are used to draw energy from objects or to put energy back into spells. Once done, the transaction can't be undone.



The coin-operated help system may not be subtle, but it's damn handy. Even the greenest of adventurers have no excuse for getting stuck in the *Shadowlands*.

Starting out on the quest, the orchard is good place to get some Granny Smith's. Ample supplies of food and water are essential to your team's health.



Stand the team on all four pressure pads and the door opens. (Unfortunately the skeleton complicates things just a bit.)

THE MOUSE CONTROL THAT ROARED

But – hey! – don't stop here arcade fans. It may one of those fantasy jobbies with nasty demons and undead and all that, but it's far from trainspottery in its execution. Whereas most role-playing games rely on numerous keyboard inputs, references to hit points and seem to display British Rail timetables on the screen for no apparent reason, *Shadowlands* dispenses with all that sort of guff. Instead it opts for an entirely mouse-driven control system, one which lets all four characters move together or be given individual instructions and left to do their own things.

LIGHTER THAN WINONA'S SMILE

All movement, object manipulation, eating, and fighting is achieved by clicking on the various body parts of the appropriate character in a small box at the bottom of the screen (the on-screen location of these boxes can be altered). To pick an object up is simply a

nasties to be dealt with. And of course, whether it's in combat or character interaction, there's always the light to be taken into consideration. Some monsters are attracted by light, others are repelled by it. There're even traps and puzzles which depend on light. Of course, all this brightness-dependent stuff means that the player's party of characters will need to carry torches everywhere they go – and these have a horrible habit of going out at the most inopportune moments. This would be bad enough even if the monsters weren't a darn sight smarter than most you'll come across – rest your party in a room without closing the doors first, for instance, and the chances are the sneaky rats that populate the game will be chewing at your warriors' sinews. Yeuck.

Have I mentioned character creation yet? Wow, now that's a doozy section of the program. For a start there's the appearance of each of the guys or gals in the party. The hair, eyes, nose and mouth/jaw can all be

land of shadows itself.

From the short intro bit (some outdoor exploration in the apple orchard and heroes' graveyard) it's into the first dungeon. Here every sort of puzzle is on show in its most basic form – you get to learn the sort of thing you're up against before it all gets much more complex. Don't worry, though – this is one of those clever programs that's sensitive to how well a player is doing, and judges the game accordingly. And, if you're really stuck, there are always the coin-operated help functions. These wall mounted devices offer not-so-cryptic help for the totally stumped – but remember that those precious coins may be much better used for buying stuff.

WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

The spell system in *Shadowlands* is another brilliantly simple system. Spell energy can be extracted from active (ie energy laden)

basics are all there, and the size and depth of the whole thing makes me forgive its little faults. I personally find it a lot more refreshing than all the *Eye Of The Beholder* lookalike games streaming out right now.

pointed face, he's straight out of Marine Boy.

box at the bottom of the screen (the off-screen location of these boxes can be

of each of the guys or gals in the party. The

brilliantly simple system. Spell energy can

refreshing than all the *Eye Of The Beholder*

Anybody remember Star Trek The Motion Picture? This is about as close as you'll get to a female character, unfortunately.

Hmm. Nice cheekbones, shame about everything else really. Still, I'm sure he's a really good magician or something to make up for it.

Now this is a cool guy. Can't you just picture him fighting in the dungeons, with a Walkman blasting the very latest rave sounds? (Or something).

altered). To pick an object up is simply a matter of clicking on a character's left hand, then the object in the play area. Throwing the object is similarly achieved by clicking on both hands, then where you want the object thrown to. Of course, if it's too heavy, then it's not going to be thrown as far. (And if the distance is negligible, then the character will walk over and carefully drop the object).

There's a lot of clever stuff going on behind the scenes here, all right – object weights, character strengths, distances, and even the effects of gravity, all are worked out by the computer as you play. The result is a game that's both realistic and darned intuitive, creating a most believable game world. There're so many of these subtleties in *Shadowlands*, it's easy to see why it took one and a half years to get finished.

As you can probably gather from the screen shots, the game is the usual 3D scrolling isometric romp both above and below ground. Treasures, food, new weapons and spell scrolls can all be collected and used, and there's the inevitable array of monsters and fiendish

hair, eyes, nose and mouth/jaw can all be re-defined. In theory this means that its possible to create your own image on screen, though in practice things aren't really that flexible – but it's fun to muck around with all the same.

COME ON BABY LIGHT MY TORCH

Then there're the character attributes. In place of boring old numbers there're nice simple bars representing strength, magik, combat ability, and health – you'll find none of those daft references to hit points, constitution, wisdom or dexterity here. If you're not happy with the computer-generated levels of these attributes then the chance card can be used. Doing this will add to some attributes while taking away from others. It's not an exact trade-off, there's a random element to the modifications, so if you want to slightly improve an almost-great character, the chances are you'll end up with a complete wimp. (Them's the breaks). Having given all four characters a face and a good selection of attributes it's on to the

be extracted from active (ie energy laden) objects. A torch or piece of food, for example, is full of potential energy. But sucking an object's lifeforce for casting spells will inevitably make the object less effective. Torches will burn out quicker. Food will have less effect. This idea of trading off one advantage over another is at the heart of *Shadowlands*. Taking firm control of one area inevitably means losing out in some other way – just like it does in real life, in fact.

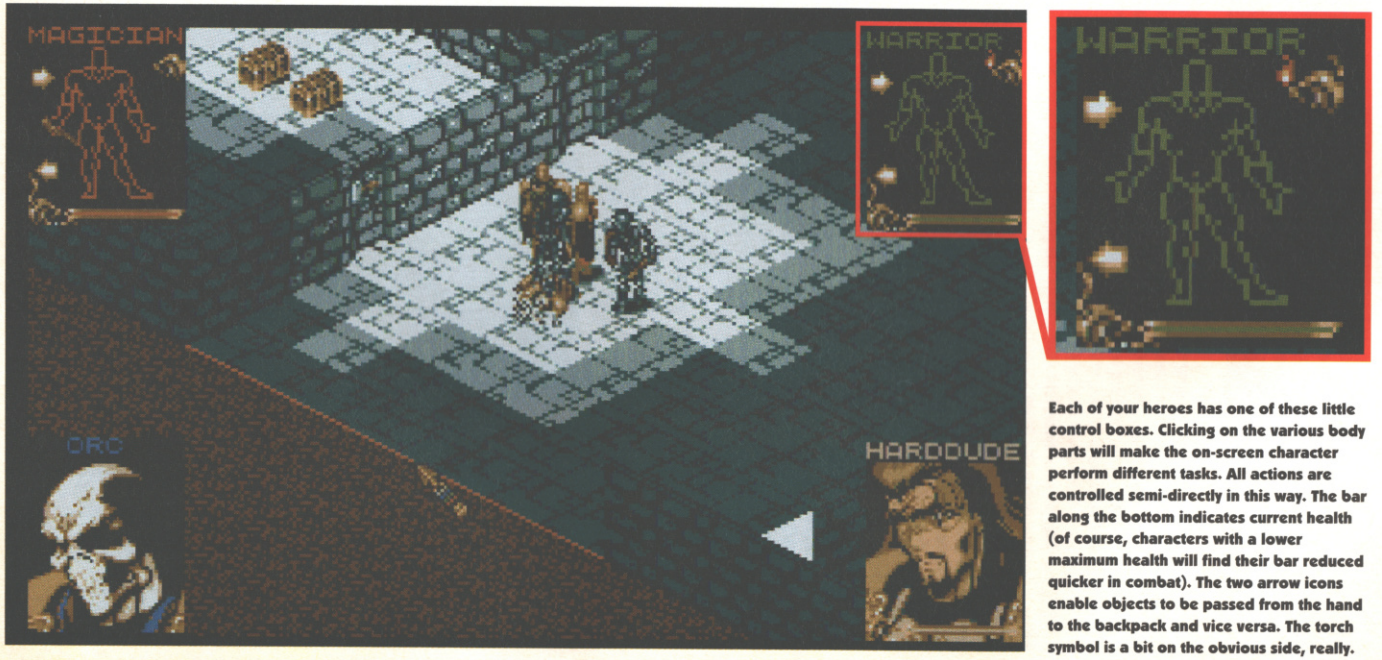
BACK TO GRIPES, BACK TO REALITY

There's just one problem – I'm running out of space, and I haven't even dug out my list of reviewer's superlatives yet. Before that though, I suppose it'd only be fair to point out a few rough edges – the graphics (too dark and dull) and scrolling being my biggest gripes. And the control system isn't perhaps quite as intuitive as it could be either (that said, half an hour or so should be enough to get the hang of it). These are really fairly minor quibbles though – in gameplay terms the lookalike games streaming out right now.

And so into my last paragraph, and I still haven't mentioned the way the walls dissolve into 'architect lines' to give the player a good view of the four characters' movement. I haven't gone into the way that the character formations can be altered at any time. I haven't really mentioned the wonderful sphere of light which follows the players around when they've got a torch, only to gradually diminish as the torch fades. Or the way that the light effects really are ray-traced to make the light fall realistically. Or the way that characters can gang up on monsters, peeling off one at a time to rest and regain health before going back into combat. Or the array of potions and spells to collect. I haven't mentioned the weird and wacky uses of the fireball spell. And I haven't even got space to mention (*Snip! – Ed*).

● ***MARK RAMSHAW***

ALWAYS LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE OF LIFE (DE DUM, DE DUM DE DUM DE DUM), LIFE'S A PIECE OF (*SNIP! -ED*)



Each of your heroes has one of these little control boxes. Clicking on the various body parts will make the on-screen character perform different tasks. All actions are controlled semi-directly in this way. The bar along the bottom indicates current health (of course, characters with a lower maximum health will find their bar reduced quicker in combat). The two arrow icons enable objects to be passed from the hand to the backpack and vice versa. The torch symbol is a bit on the obvious side, really.

UPPERS At last, an RPG game which doesn't inflict statistics on the player. True multi-tasking, brilliantly subtle game mechanics and some finely designed levels and puzzles make *Shadowlands* a joy, even for the non-RPG types. The use of light and shadows works really well – and actually add a lot to the game, being integral to much of the puzzle design.

DOWNERS Despite the presentation and mouse-driven controls, it's never going to compete with arcade games for instant kicks. The graphic are a little rough around the edges, too (the use of colour is pretty unimaginative) and the scrolling is a bit on the crap side. Sound is minimal also – context-sensitive soundtracks would have added a lot to the atmosphere. And it's a pity the shadow effect has to be so blocky.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Shadowlands is to role-playing games what *Exile* was to arcade games. The hidden rules and physics are integral to everything without being too obvious, contrived or 'visible'. It's not exactly fast, and it's not the best looking thing around, but a quick play will reveal that it's actually damn absorbing stuff. A winner.

87 PERCENT

It's the first time we've delved into the world of *Larry*, and, well, it's a bit of a 'specialist' taste...

LEISURE SUIT LARRY 5

Game: Leisure Suit Larry 5
Publisher: Sierra
Author: Al Lowe
Price: £34.99
Release: Out now

From the 'parental discretion' warning on the box to the scantily clad female flesh scattered throughout the packaging, it's clear that Sierra is perfectly happy to keep the *Leisure Suit Larry* series where it's always been, walking the sidewalks of Sleazeville.

For those of you unfamiliar with the sexploits of Larry Laffer, a 40-year-old self-styled ladies man and celebrated (?) no-hoper, his story began in 1988 in Sierra's *The Land Of The Lounge Lizards*. His mission? To 'score with a chick', of course. Thus the formula for this phenomenally successful innuendo-laden interactive adventure series was born – a point-and-click romp through a series of pre-defined encounters, each with a puzzle or two to be solved.

His next two adventures – *Looking For Love In Several Wrong Places* and *Passionate Patti In Pursuit Of The Pulsating Pectorals* – further explored the lower echelons of locker-room humour, adding a spot of KGB-embroiled intrigue and introduced us to Passionate Patti, nightclub pianist-cum-FBI agent and foil to Larry's ineptitude.

And so now we come to game number five. Hang on a minute, though – can't somebody count around here? Whatever happened to *LSL4*?

Well, it's a joke, you see. Apparently Patti has run off with it. *LSL4: The Missing Floppies* details Larry's and Patti's passionate affair which happened after *LSL3*, you see, and there ain't no way she's letting us look at it. A shame.

Hence the latest installment – *Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does A Little Undercover Work*. Larry finds himself working for a TV company specialising in pornography (surprise, surprise) and is given the job of finding the sexiest woman in America to star in a new show. Meanwhile, the Mob is keen to get porn off the TV and profitably back under the counter – to this end, it is engaged in making sure the show gets banned. Patti's task is to finger the man behind the mob which, as one might guess from the title, is more than likely to entail her taking her clothes off and having sex with people. Good for her – I understand it's a very old and revered profession.

Mr Big, the sleazeball who sets Larry his pervy task.

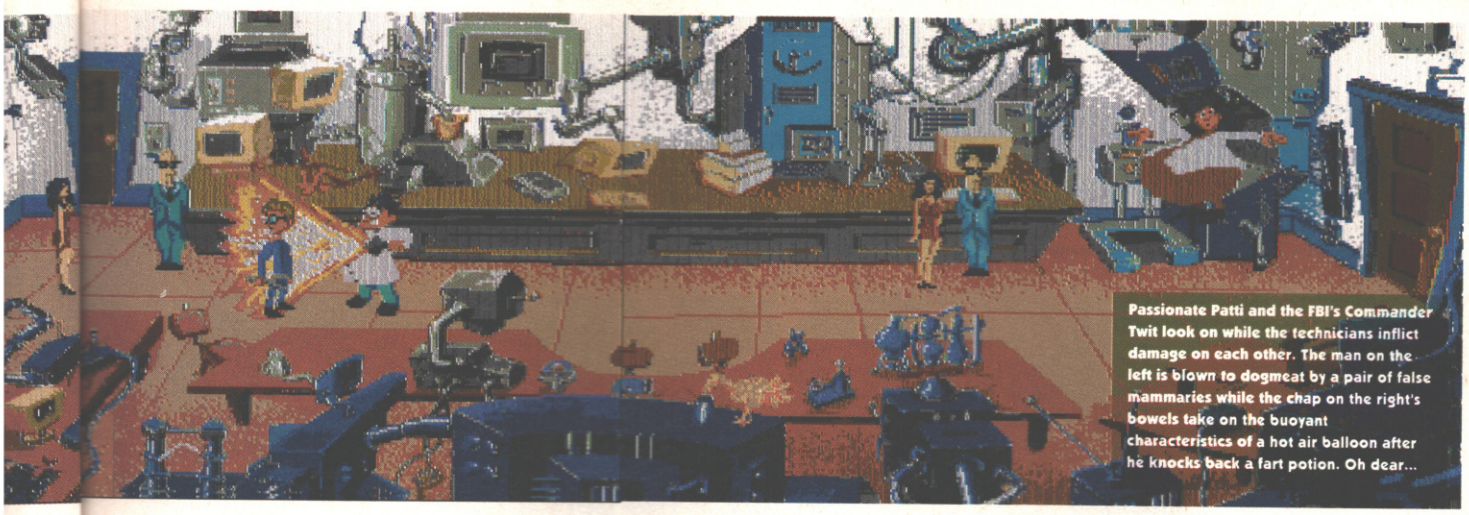
So far, so smutty. The adventure, if you will, kicks off with Larry setting out to find three sexy women and video his 'dealings' with them so his boss can appraise their performance. Hidden around the TV company offices are a selection of items that will enable Larry to travel, find the women and bring back the footage. Your actions – for you, of course, play Larry – are carried out by means of a selection of cursors, each having a different function which can be selected from a pull-down menu at the top of the screen or by cycling through them with the right-hand mouse button.

For example, if you want to find out more about the lampshades, select the Look icon, click on the shades and a message ('they're just hanging around, just like you Larry') will appear. There are action icons for walking and talking and one for manipulating an object, which is great fun when you click it on Larry as the message implies that he's fondling himself. Oh, what a hoot.

Each time you collect the right object, which goes into Larry's inventory, a little 'ping' sounds to tell you you've done the right thing and off you go to the next scene. At this point it's wise to put the kettle on for, even when installed on a hard drive, the story update is sloooow.

Indeed, if there's one thing sure to sabotage the Amiga version far beyond the soon-wearing nature of the subject matter, it's this. It's yawnsville, alright – and it's not as if you can sit back and admire the gorgeous graphics on display

Here we see Larry attempting to blag his way in to the Hard Disk Café. First he must get past the mâitre d' (above) with a spot of bribery. Once he's become a member of this exclusive establishment, he gets his seat. Unfortunately, it's in the wrong part of the restaurant (top right). So, a little more bribery later and he's allowed into the inner sanctum (right) where sits the delectable Michelle Milkem, the first of the three sexy women. And, after a quick bit of foreplay with a banana dessert (right), she tickles Larry's fancy. Hmm.



Passionate Patti and the FBI's Commander Twit look on while the technicians inflict damage on each other. The man on the left is blown to dogmeat by a pair of false mammaries while the chap on the right's bowels take on the buoyant characteristics of a hot air balloon after he knocks back a fart potion. Oh dear...

while your drive grunts away, either. Perspective and proportion have gone out of the window in favour of a stylised, comedic setting, but the drawings look clumsy and do little to draw you into the action. The animation is worse.

However, the game does have variety on its side. If you tire of playing Larry, just wait till he falls asleep on the airplane en route to his first steamy encounter. At this point, if you can prevent yourself from joining him in Nodland, you get the chance to – hurrah! – play Patti.

Having found herself made redundant from her job as a singer/pianist, she is enlisted into the FBI – fairly standard recruitment practice I believe – and set loose to uncover the Mob. And here's where *LSL5* starts to get stupid.

During her induction into the Bureau, you may laugh as a technician is carried off-screen by a heat-seeking vibrator. Or titter as another is blown to pieces by a pair of false-breast mounted cannon. Or chortle as yet another technician is propelled across the lab by his own flatulence. Or perhaps you might not. By the time an FBI's gynaecologist started to fit Patti with an in-body tracking device I'd more than had enough.

LARRY'S BLINDINGLY SMUTTY HUMOUR

And there's more side-splitting eroticism to come as the game switches back to Larry. My first trembling foray had him travel to New York to meet the first of his quarry in the Hard Disk Café – bit of a computer joke there, eh, tech-heads? After getting past the snooty maître d' and striking up a conversation with one of the three sexiest women in America, Larry is treated to the sight of her doing something original with a banana dessert, followed by – but, ah. If you're even going to consider buying the game we don't want to spoil all the thrills, now, do we? Suffice to say, it'll appeal to those who get eye strain at the newsagent through ogling the top-shelf mags while fumbling for their copy of AP...

"Saddled with a lot of distinctly sub-Carry On perv jokes"

So where does this leave us. Well, with a very average graphic adventure game saddled with a lot of distinctly sub-Carry On perv jokes. I've seen reviews of *LSL* before and Sierra is not ashamed to quote glowing approval from Playboy, Rolling Stone and the Wall Street Journal in its blurb. Such publications are obviously off on the 'it's harmless risque fun' and the 'golly, isn't it amazing what you can do with porn and computers' angle so beloved of our tabloids, and I suppose we can forgive them – they don't know what a good computer game looks like.

For the rest of us though, it's all rather sad. If we put aside prudishness for a moment, I'm perfectly prepared to believe that there is a place for sexy, adult adventure games – but they have to be well put together too. My apologies to Larry Laffer's creator Al Lowe, who must have had a good time thinking up the various 'funnies' here, but this simply isn't a good game.

In brief then: it's painfully slow, the puzzles are in some cases insoluble without the hint manual, the animation is so-so, the graphics are average... In short, it's a trial to play. As for the humour, well, that's entirely a matter of taste. If you're the sort of person likely to blurt embarrassing one-liners in the style of Finbarr Saunders then you may find yourself outclassed, or outcrassed, by some of the jokes in *LSL*. (Then again, you'll be just as satisfied by a copy of Viz, which is almost 40 times cheaper). The accompanying booklet describes Larry as the consummate ladies man (sic) and yet, to paraphrase, only rarely does *LSL* manage to consummate anything at all. Laugh? I nearly did.

● *KARL FOSTER*

LEISURE SUIT LARRY IN PUZZLE TROUBLE

Although the 'humour' in *Leisure Suit Larry 5* may make the game a worthwhile purchase for those of certain comic tastes, any worthwhile criticism has to consider gameplay first. And a large part of the art of designing a good game is in balancing challenge and reward...

The challenge of *LSL5* – aside from the self-control required in not putting your boot through the monitor at some of the smart-ass wisecracks – is trying to figure out whether there's any logic behind the puzzles at all. For example, when Larry is asked to go out and get video footage of the three sexy women, he must obviously take a video camera, some tapes and some money. Hands up who spotted what's missing? Yep, the battery charger. And how do we charge the batteries with it? At a power outlet, which you'll of course find... at the airport! Obvious really, as is the fact that you'll still get nowhere because you must completely wipe clean the tapes before you set off. HOW MANY BLEEDIN' VIDEO CAMERAS ARE INCAPABLE OF RECORDING OVER OLD TAPES?! The one Larry's got, apparently.

With such a level of assumed knowledge cropping up throughout the game (you just can't solve some of the puzzles), the purchase of the (handily available) hint book is essential. Clever old Sierra. Simply by putting some ludicrous, illogical 'puzzles' in the game they've guaranteed a whole load of people will have to lay out another £7.99 just to complete the thing.

Aha! Larry's found the credit card, but how does he know what to do with it? You'll just have to go and buy the *LSL5* hint manual to find out. (A snip at £7.99!)

UPPERS A jolly cocktail lounge-style soundtrack sets off the sleaze quite well, and I'm told at least one of the jokes is funny. Even better, there's a no-risk money back guarantee.

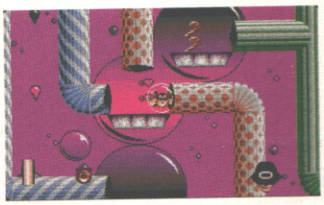
DOWNERS The puzzles are infuriatingly illogical (captain), the action is slow and there's no real addiction factor. Even the promise of finding anything seriously pornographic in here is an empty one.

THE BOTTOM LINE

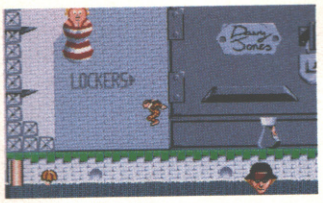
If you enjoyed the first three in the series, well, it's a free country. However, if it's titillation you want, buy the Sunday Sport. If it's a computer game you're after, stuff the sleaze and get Sierra's *King's Quest V* instead – much more wholesome. (And a good deal more fun.)

50 PERCENT

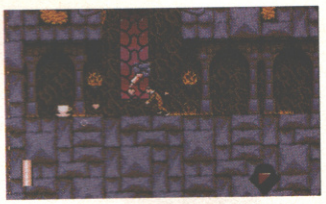
Harlequin clings perilously to a kite in the first between-levels bonus section...



...whereas here he finds himself in a bubble inside a milkshake in the second!



In the swimming pool stage, watch out for slippery floors and evil 'Matey' bottles...



Looking like something from the set of 'Gamesmaster', the Hell level is truly grim.

HARLEQ

The race is on to produce the perfect *Sonic The Hedgehog*

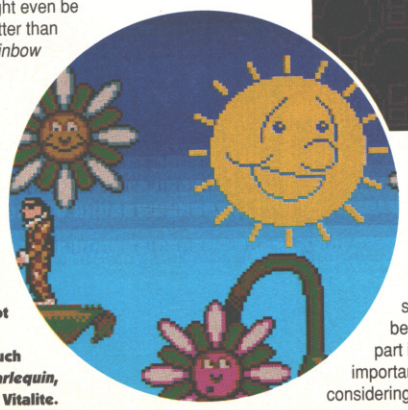
Game: Harlequin
Publisher: Gremlin
Price: £25.99
Authors: Andrew Findlay (code), Ed Campbell (graphics), Barry Leitch (music)
Release: Out now

This two-part map screen scrolls to show which part of Chimerica you're currently tomfoolering around in. The top section includes the clock tower, Jigsaw World, and of course, Heaven...

...while Hell is obviously found 'down below'. Other subterranean levels include the crypts, the sewers, the spooky Alice-In-Wonderland bit, and lots of other creepy stuff. Of course, many of these levels include sub-levels within them, and parts of the TV Wonderland section can be found down here too.

Last year might not have been a vintage one for the Amiga games industry as a whole, but one genre certainly did pretty well out of it. The platform game was raised to new heights (no pun intended) in 1991 by the likes of *Chuck Rock* (genuine cartoon graphics and design with imagination), *Switchblade II* (big, bold, brash and brilliant), *Toki* (a perfect coin-op conversion), *Rodland* (a better-than-perfect coin-op conversion!), *The Blues Brothers* (playability taken to the extreme), *Scooby Doo And Scrappy Doo* (gorgeous console-esque cartoon action at a giveaway price) and *First Samurai* (technical supremacy for once accompanied by magnificent gameplay). Two things suggest to me, though, that platform-game-wise, 1992 could make 1991 look like 1977. One of them is *Titus The Fox* (the follow-up to *The Blues Brothers*, previewed in this issue's True Stories), and the other one is *Harlequin*.

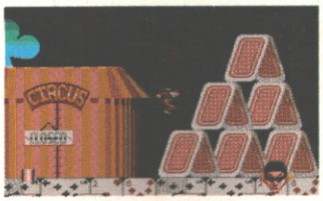
Now, the more alert amongst you may remember back as far as issue seven, when our erstwhile Dep Ed Colin Campbell reviewed Millennium's *Robocod* (heretically claiming it might even be 'better than *Rainbow Islands*', for which he was promptly sacked). Now, while *Robocod* is a fine game, it has to be said that for some of us here it was just a bit on the, er, empty side. While undeniably beautiful-looking, for the most part it was largely lacking in all-important action – hardly surprising considering how horribly jerky it went when more than a few sprites came on screen.



Not so much *Harlequin*, as Vitalite.

Harlequin is, in many ways, very similar in look to Millennium's game (in some parts it's very, very similar indeed) but where it differs crucially is in the fact that there's never a dull moment. From the word go, you're assailed by all manner of surreal nasties in large numbers, and the flow doesn't let up until the moment your be-chequered hero breathes his last. But that's not to say that you're dealing with a brainless hack-'em-up in the style of, say, Gremlin's *Switchblade II*. *Harlequin* has much more in common with arcade adventures like *First Samurai*, with lots of thoughtful and tricky puzzle-solving to do if you want to see every single level of Chimerica, the dreamworld where the game is set. For a quick example of what I'm talking about, let's take a look at the first stage.

The 'Learning Curve' level, though, could have come straight out of 'Play School'.



The circus features jugglers, tightrope cyclists, and all manner of Big Top japery.

This world might look a bit like Captain Planet, but wait – it's *not* totally crap!

Oh no! Music is dead! Could this be the end of the world as we know it?

UIN

styled scrolling platform game. Can Gremlin's new candy-coated hero outdo Millennium's mean metallic fish?

11 O'CLOCK TICK TOCK

The level is based around a giant clocktower, whose clock has actually stopped. You begin at the foot of the tower, beside a huge door which is locked and bolted. You have to negotiate your way to the top of the tower (strangely reminiscent of the classic *Nebulus*, this bit) by way of platform-leaping, finding switches as you go which move certain platforms, removing certain obstacles and so on. Doing this will get you to the top of the tower, where you can flick the switch which opens the tower door. Get safely back down to the bottom and you can go through the door, entering the inner workings of the clock. Battle your way through this stage by the same method, and eventually you'll be able to fix the clock mechanism from within.

Now all you have to do is get safely back out and climb up to the top of the tower all over again, where you'll see the hands of the clock whizzing happily round once more. One well-timed jump will see Harlequin grab onto the end of the clock hand, from where he can leap off and catch hold of a kite positioned at the 11 o'clock position, which will carry him (via a bonus stage) to the next level. Phew. One level down, only twenty odd more to go...

"It bounds instantly to the peak of platform games"

CHASING THE CHIMERICAN DREAM

Don't think there's little to *Harlequin* but sheer scale though. The highly believable Alice-In-Wonderland nightmare that is Chimerica is one of the most beautiful yet menacing game settings I've ever seen, and the use of colour as a tool of atmosphere is inspirational. From the bright and cheerful pinks of the 'inside-a-milk-shake' bonus game to the candy-striped dayglo hues of Heaven or the happy greens and yellows of the *Captain Planet*-like jigsaw world to the gloomy dark blues of the crypts and the fiery reds glowering demonically out of the blackness of Hell, every level of the game subtly creates a state of mind appropriate to the particular scenario at that point. (There are various routes to the end, meaning you don't actually have to play every level to finish the game, so if you're prone to depression you might be well advised to steer clear of some sections altogether...)

The graphics themselves are gorgeous, with super-smooth movement and much use of arcs and curves (you get to do a lot of rope-swinging in this game, which is an oft-neglected tension-creating device) to counter the often-artificial blocks-and-ladders feel which many platformers seem to suffer from. Of course, the nicest graphics in the world are worthless without playability, but *Harlequin*'s got that in buckets too – your character is controllable to a high degree of precision, which means than when you plummet from a precarious ledge or platform to the bottom of a level you've just spent five minutes climbing to the top of, it's your own stupid fault. Certainly this can get frustrating, but the immensely rewarding nature of the gameplay draws you irresistibly back for another go all the same.

NOW, THE IMPORTANT STUFF

But of course, if you're a regular reader of AMIGA POWER, you'll realise that all of this stuff counts for nothing anyway. When it comes to reviewing a game, the mark →

The Sun arches his eyebrows in a tired, 'seen-it-all-before' manner as our hero bounds enthusiastically through Cutesy Land in this cheeky little *Mario Bros* spoof level

CLOWNING AROUND

Our hero employs a fair old number of personal transportation methods in *Harlequin*, as you can see in these examples. Crazy shirt, crazy guy...

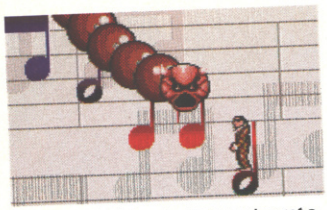
Left: The bold boy calls on that classic cartoon device, the parachute umbrella, to slow his descent down a big drop.

My Life As A Fish – even underwater, Harlequin retains his distinctive look.

The jester ponders the wisdom of having that argument with Bub and Bob.

Hanging on grimly, Harlequin mounts his spacehopper and, like a rubber ball, comes on bouncing back to TV Wonderland.

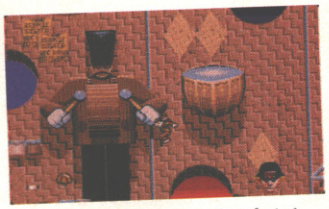
Swing low, sweet idiot – he may be a fool, but he's not letting go...



Well, if music *is* dead, at least we've got a pretty good idea of what killed it...

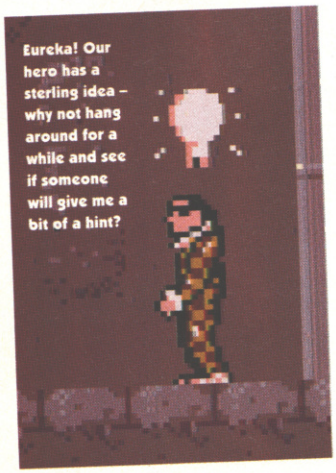
'Ooh! I looooove tunnels!', says Harlequin, and you can see what he means, can't you?

The Bomb Run is a scary level – those bombs don't half go off with a bang.



Not exactly a little drummer boy, but at least he's not out to get you.

we give something depends entirely on how many Nice Touches it's got. Luckily, Nice Touches are something which cascade from *Harlequin* like 10p pieces out of a fruit machine on a particularly good day. You want Nice Touches? How about the way our hero stands and pants, gasping for breath with his heart beating almost out of his chest when you stop after an especially strenuous bout of running and jumping? Or the little lightbulbs which appear above his head at strategic points through the game, whereupon if he stands still for a couple of seconds, you get a subtle clue as to what to do next? Or how, as you jump along the keys of a giant piano/organ in one level, each key makes the proper note as you land on it, sharps and flats and all? Or that when you're in one of the underwater sections (with Harlequin transformed into a cute fish, still retaining his unique costume design), the hearts he usually fires at baddies appear in little bubbles, and are affected by the water's currents? Or the advertising hoardings scattered through some stages which actually advertise the later stages, and change according to how close you are to reaching them? Or, or, or... well, we wouldn't want to spoil it for you completely. On Nice Touches alone, *Harlequin* bounds instantly to the very peak of the rather colossal mountain that is Amiga platform games, and when you chuck in all its other great points as well, only the very very best have a chance of touching it.



Yep, time flies when you're playing *Harlequin*...

QUIBBLES? WHO NEEDS 'EM, EH?

This is an addictive arcade game, an explorer's dream, a puzzling adventure and an emotional rollercoaster ride all in one. Quibbles? Forget quibbles. I'm fed up of having to pick holes in brilliant games just for the sake of an illusion of balance. If there was anything seriously wrong with this then I wouldn't love it, so I'm not going to whinge on about any flaws in might have so I look objective. Reviewing is a subjective art, and as long as it's done by humans it always will be – I think *Harlequin* is fab and I don't care who knows it. Trust me on this one.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS Beautiful graphics, exquisite gameplay, a handy save feature, loads of depth and more imagination than every other game in this issue put together.

DOWNERS The size of your task may prove too daunting for the weak-willed. Can be occasionally frustrating.

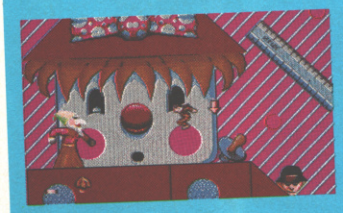
THE BOTTOM LINE

This is the game *Robocod* should have been. The more you play it, the better it gets. Right up there with *First Samurai*, but perhaps more importantly, right up there with (and beyond) *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

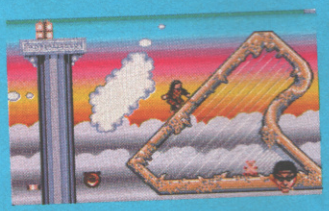
91 PERCENT

MY EVER CHANGING MOODS

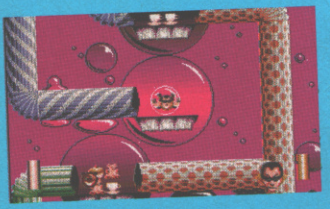
One of the very greatest things about *Harlequin* is the way different senses of atmosphere are created by the design and look of the levels – to explain it properly, let's take a little trip through just a few of the game's different sectors, and examine how they illustrate the eternal conflict between the forces of good and evil, cutesy platform game style.



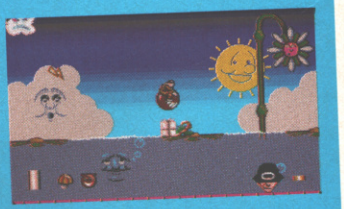
Punch And Judy or what? Whites, pinks and light blues make the Learning Curve level look like Andy Pandy come to life.



In Heaven, everything is fine. Or at least, in Heaven everything is fluffy clouds and rainbow-coloured stripey bits.

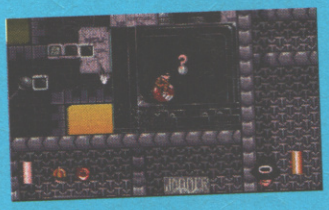


What could possibly be nicer or more reassuring than a strawberry milk shake? (Well, one 300 feet tall, maybe...)



'Cutesy Bros' really says it all, doesn't it? You couldn't put the wind up a seriously disturbed seven-year-old with this...

You might not have sympathy for the Devil, but if he has to live here you can at least see how he ended up the way he did.



'TV Wonderland'. I don't know about you lot, but there's nothing quite as eerie for me as a million broken TV sets...

It's yet another game with sewers in it, but they've never been this dank and slimy before. You'll want a bath afterwards.

The Crypt level is full of malicious-looking undertakers, ominous coffins and all sorts of deeply distressing stuff.

• • • DEATH SLIDE • UNICYCLES • MAN LIFTING KITES • SAND SNAKES • SCORPIONS • • •

CAN YOU MEND CHIMERICAS BROKEN HEART?

HARLEQUIN

• • • DEATH SLIDE • UNICYCLES • MAN LIFTING KITES • SAND SNAKES • SCORPIONS • • •

• • • HAYWIRE ALARM CLOCKS • BULLET SPITTING BUDDAHS • AND MUCH MUCH MORE • • •

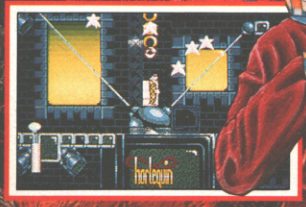
Amiga Action Accolade 93%. *"Harlequin is one hell of a game that is extremely innovative, exciting and challenging."*

Ace Trailblazer 900 *"Harlequin comes across as one of the most athletic games stars since the Prince of Persia or the great Sonic himself."*

The One 90% *"A superior platform come puzzle game with bags of atmosphere."*

Games X. X Rated XXXXX Game of the week. *"Add Harlequin to the long list of must buys from Gremlin."*

Produced by the Warp Factory.



Available on Atari ST/STE & Amiga

GREMLIN®

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Carver House, 2-4 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS.

PROBABLY THE STRANGEST GAME EVER!

By the powers of Baarma, up...

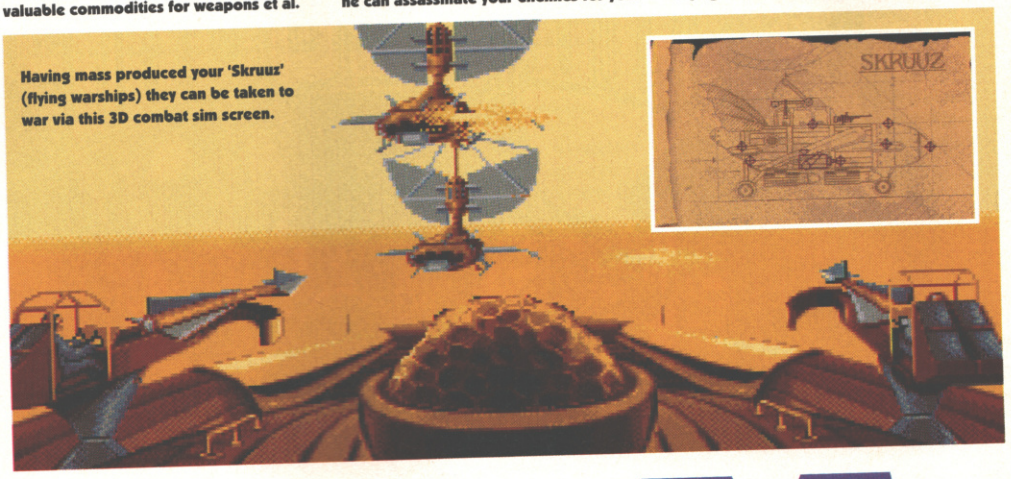
Use the bustling stock market to trade valuable commodities for weapons et al.

The Inquisitor's lair. A secret policeman, he can assassinate your enemies for you.

Use your Leonardo to design some wacky flying ships, then it's off into 3D combat.

...up...

...and away!



Having mass produced your 'Skruuz' (flying warships) they can be taken to war via this 3D combat sim screen.

STORM MASTER

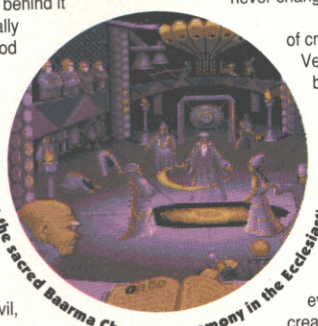
Blending elements of Dune with some gorgeous graphics and yer standard strategy

Game: Storm Master
Publisher: Silmarils (Daze Marketing)
Price: £25.99
Authors: Andre Rocques, Louis-Marie Rocques
Release: March

You remember Silmarils, of course. They're a French lot, they used to be distributed by Palace, but now a new outfit, Daze, are bringing them into this country. And yes, they've actually done some quite good games, *Boston Bomb Club* most recently. (They've also done some rubbish, like *Crystals Of Arborea*, but we'll quickly skip over that). Anyway – like almost everybody right now it seems – they've got the epic fantasy game bug at the moment, though, being French, their effort is rather weirder than most. It's also rather good – I've not been submerged into a more atmospherically pleasing fantasy-cum-strategy trip in a long time.

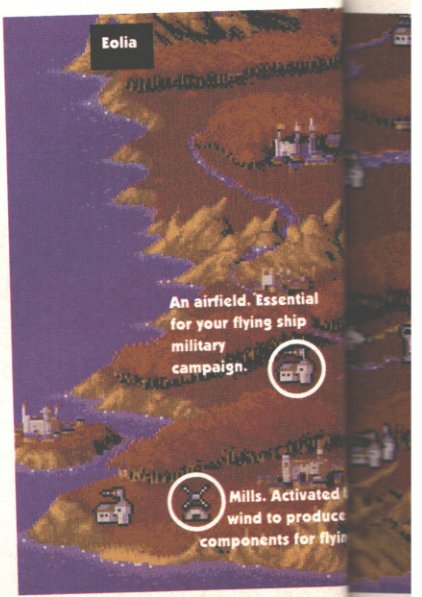
The introduction sequence certainly unfolds rather slickly – good artistry and atmospheric music all go together to create some great storm effects helped by some lovely shades of orange and purple – and happily the game behind it doesn't disappoint visually either. This is a very good looking product.

The action is set on a strange planet called Urgaa, where the power of wind governs all natural harmony, and the dynasties of the twin islands of Eolia and Sharkaania battle for absolute power. The evil, nasty, meanies are the Sharkaanians. All you need to know about the history of the lands at this point is that Sharkaanian mercenaries have murdered the Grand Magister of Eolia and you have been appointed by the Council of Seven to take on the role of Chief. Success, destiny, power, and the fruits of victory – which, of course, include the chance to marry a typically beautiful princess – lie in your hands. Some things never change, eh?



Perform the sacred Baarma Chapters ceremony in the Ecclesiast's Temple

The setting is a sort of cross between Jules Verne and Dune then, but the game itself is decidedly another modern variant on the *Kingdoms* theme, something that seems to be quite popular at the moment. As Grand Magister you control everything, from creating magic spells and controlling the growth of food in Eolia to commissioning Kray twin-type characters to assassinate the opposition or launching full scale campaigns against your neighbours. It's a managerial juggling act then, with you flicking from screen to



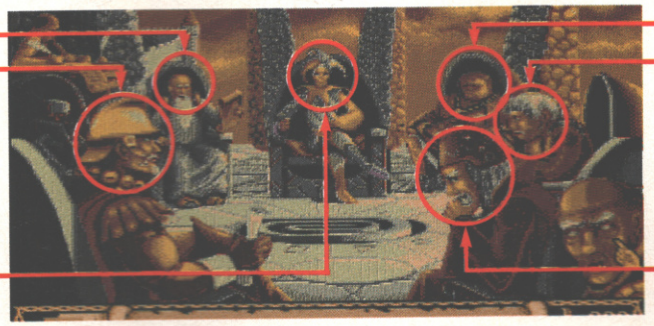
THE COUNCIL OF SEVEN

Each of these characters is essential to your success – including the Inquisitor (not highlighted) who does your dirty work. Click on your Adviser (bottom right) to find out more.

The Leonardo is a most important chap. He's responsible for the design and mass production of your flying ships.

The Commander – he sorts out everything to do with your military campaigns.

The Joker looks after leisure and entertainment – very important because you must keep your population happy.



The High Constable is another you can't afford to ignore. He runs the stock exchange, so you'll need him for trading.

The Master Miller handles production of materials, food and hardware.

The Ecclesiast is the magic and religious man in your kingdom, with the powers to affect all aspects of your campaign.

screen in an attempt to build up your nation's power to a point where you can either mount an attack on Sharkaania or, if everything's going horribly wrong, at least ward off one of their attacks. Skilful and shrewd use of your kingdom's resources should enable you to establish stable control – careless over-spending or negligence of your people could see you murdered in the bath by an embittered subject – allowing you to concentrate on building up a successful offensive.

So how's it structured? Well, the first screen of the game gives you a choice of six scenarios and five levels. Each scenario deals with a different period in the history of Eolia. Scenario zero is entitled 'The Golden Age' – set in the year 7272, it gives you an ideal start (Sharkaania has been struck by famine and the Council of Seven ruling Eolia in great harmony).

As I mentioned before, making just about anything work in your kingdom requires you to use the winds. Wind enables you to get around – in wacky great flying ships – and, even more importantly, run the economy. Manufacturing is achieved through windmills – you'll need these to help build your flying ships before you get to go anywhere, for instance. (There's no chance of using the water that surrounds your island for transport – it's occupied by a humungous great sea monster beastie who'll gobble up anyone who risks it). During play you can hurry time on by clicking on the date icon, but be careful – the more you do this, the longer the baddies get to plan their strategy or pillage your lands.

"A pleasing fantasy-cum-strategy trip"

The centre of the game is your Council of Seven screen. To go through every aspect of the game means clicking on the appropriate character – Adviser, Ecclesiast, Master Miller, High Constable, Joker, Leonardo, Scribe, Inquisitor and Commander. They are your deputies, if you like, and you must go to one of these to access any part of the game Almost everything you do costs money (measured in 'Kaa') – how much you have of this is indicated in the treasure icon at the bottom of the screen. Don't spend it all at once, though – remembered that everything in this world is linked, and could affect your people's well being.The rule seems to be coordinate and delegate but never vegetate.

And there you have it really – you certainly can't complain that it doesn't give you a lot to do. Though it's true that we've seen this sort of thing before – everything from *Mega lo Mania* to *Deuteros* to *Realms* has a bit of *Kingdoms* in it – it's rarely looked this good (the 3D combat section being particularly striking). Your animated ship takes off from an airbase in your kingdom and is controlled by means of the icons at the base of the screen. With these you control the direction of your ship, and whether it lands, loots or bombs enemy territory. Once intercepted by an enemy ship you automatically go to 3D action mode. It's all very impressive – distinctively individual and very stylish with stunning sound effects to match the zap of the giant crossbows and thump of the air-to-air catapult as it launches its massive bombs.

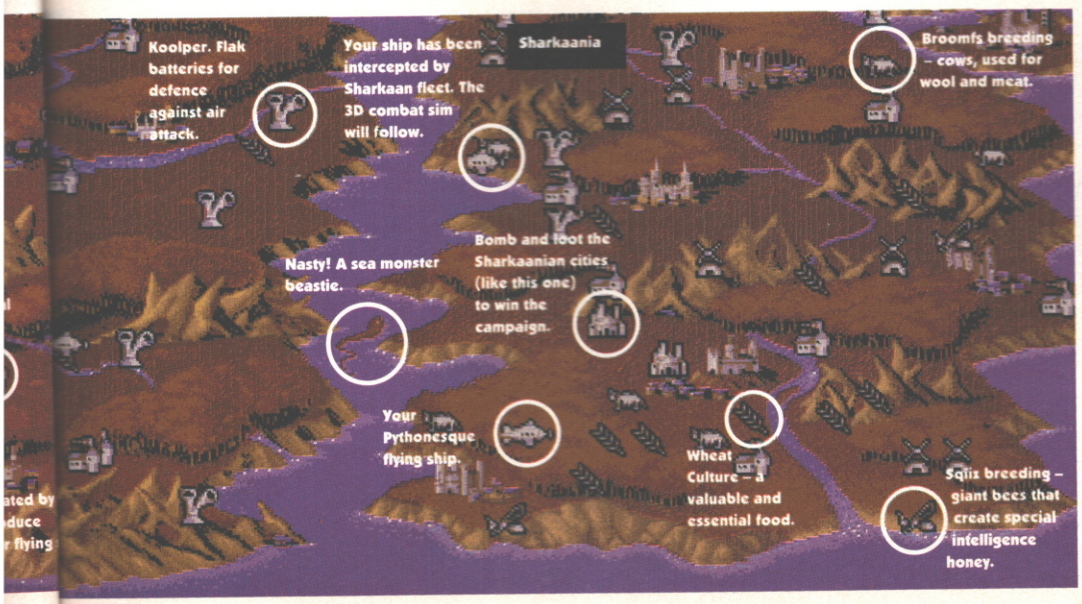
Storm Master has scope too. Five different scenarios mean you can approach things from a number of different angles – you can build up your kingdom from scratch, or you can come in during specific periods of war or famine.

So what's wrong with it? Well, very little, as it happens. This might not be quite as impressive as recent Ubi Soft products, but it's easily the best from Silmarils yet, and pushes them towards the fore of French publishers. What it sets out to do – provide an epic strategy/management thing in a fantasy setting – it does very well, and if there's nothing all that original or new about it, well, fair enough. Complaints about the gameplay – it can be frustrating not being provided with the right components to build your airships, for instance – are few and far between.

A megalomaniac's delight then – perhaps more immediately accessible than *Realms*, say, if a generally less ambitious project. What can I say? I thoroughly enjoyed it.

●*MATTHEW SQUIRES*

gy wargame, Silmarils come up with a *Kingdoms* for the '90s.



UPPERS Well put together, easy to use and atmospheric *Kingdoms* variant. Well up there with *Realms* and the rest.

DOWNERS It outdoes itself in some sections where the effects are so good that the gameplay can't match up.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Stunning graphics, slick animation and sound effects – it's mesmerising and thoroughly enjoyable to play too. Put the cat out and make sure the Pizza Delivery people know your address. This one really is special.

86 PERCENT

BLACK CRYPT

It may not be the most sophisticated of RPGs, but Gaz Penn likes it. The thing is, we're not sure why...

Game: Black Crypt
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £25.99
Authors: Ben Gokey, Rick Johnson (Programming), Brian & Steve Raffel (Graphics), Jon Medek (Sound) and Kevin Schilder (Music) at Raven Software.
Release: 13th March

I hate to admit it, but I...I... But no, I can't say it. Look, the thing is, as far as I'm concerned, there's only one thing more tedious than Fantasy Role Playing Games – the people who play them. Oh yes, and the people who make them. Two things then. An RPG represents escapism for accountants. I've never liked them and I never will.

That said, I've still got an outside chance of coming somewhere in the Mr Objective Reviewer Of The Year Awards, so perhaps I'd better give this here one, *Black Crypt*, a fair crack of the whip. I'll do my best anyway. (And anyway, Mark bloody Ramshaw, who normally does this sort of stuff, seems to have disappeared off somewhere, so it's down to me).

I guess the first requisite for an FRPG is some mystical twaddle. *Black Crypt*'s concerns some top Cleric chap called Estoroth Paingiver who did something rotten a few years back and was chucked out of the country of Astera. He wasn't a happy chappy, and so returned with some of his mates for a revenge kicking session, which he thought was successful until the Four Guilds Of Astera got together and sent Estoroth into

"It somehow managed to draw me in and keep me there"

WHAT'S WHAT IN THE BLACK CRYPT

Your window onto the world of *Black Crypt* takes up the best part of the left-hand corner of the screen.

Functions, however, are by and large performed via two banks of icons dotted around the view. Objects seen through the window are picked up (or manipulated in the case of switches) with the mouse pointer.

ENTER THE BLACK CRYPT... AMIGA POWER PRESENTS A SHORT GUIDED TOUR OF BLACK CRYPT'S FIRST LEVEL

This is where a new party is created. The statistics for each character determine his strength, fighting skills, and ability to use magic. I'm going to change their names to those of four true heroes: the Bitmap Brothers. Let's see... Mike the Fighter, Eric the Cleric, Steve the Magic User and Dan the Druid should do it. Suitable faces are then taken from a choice of nine for each team member. I'm now ready to enter the crypt...

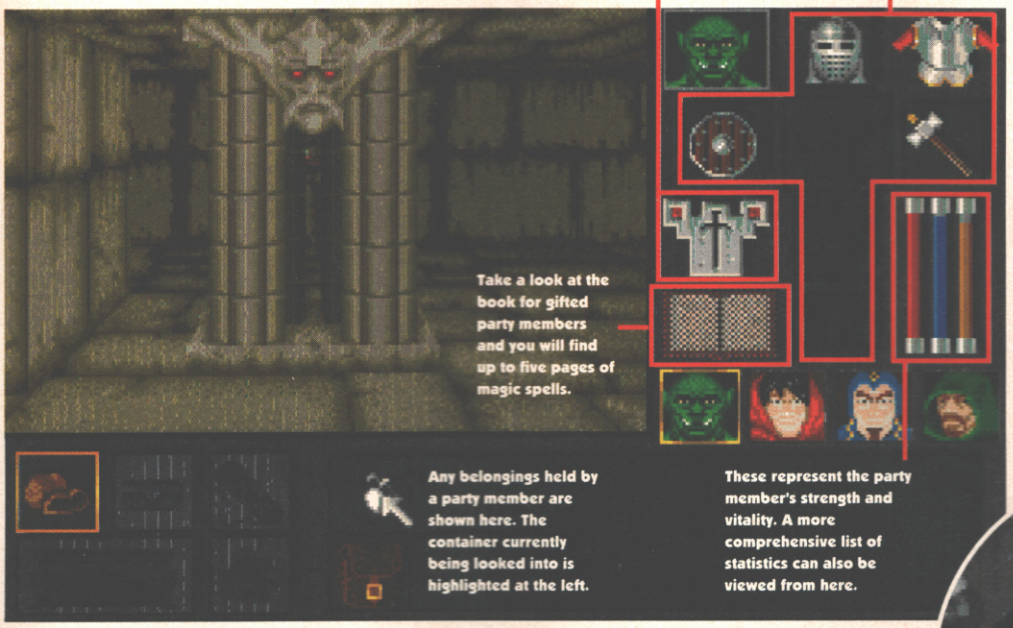
So here I am in the dungeon – after much loading and disk swapping I may add – with my party. And what a party. God, there's not a beer nor a bird to be seen, only a Wooden Shield and a Back Pack. Let's see what the Bros have brought though... Mike's got an Apple (we could make some cider), and Eric's got a Water Flask (full of water unfortunately). Steve has a piece of Cheese. Dan's got a chunky leg of Meat. Great.

Just past an ominous plaque I found stairs leading to a lower level, but I didn't go down there, where it counts – more experience is needed first, I think. No, instead I found a Tower Shield for Eric and a Bag, which holds up to four items, for Steve. I also found this here door, which opened when I pulled the chain to reveal another door beyond, only this one's locked. Evidently we need a key to progress this way.

On our way to find a key we turned a corner to meet... THIS! A rough old dog after a snog. Time for a ruck methinks. The fighting's easy enough. You can use spells or rely on good old fashioned weapons and fists. When the enemy is hit (hooray), the number of points removed is shown inside a little red flash over the character's portrait. When a party member gets hit (boo), the hit points removed are shown with a skull in a flash.

THE BACKPACKER'S GUIDE TO THE BLACK CRYPT

The inventory screen can be accessed without losing the main 3D view of the crypt. Spells can be looked up, and objects can be stored in containers, worn or held using this screen.



another dimension. But now he's threatening to escape and blah blah blah blah boring boring BORING! (Why they can't think up some sort of proper storylines I just don't know).

(I... No, I still can't). There's an even poncier version of the story in the back of the manual, but what all it amounts to is taking a party of four brave adventurers – different characters, each with their own positive and negative traits – into the maze-like Black Crypt, collecting the objects (the most important being the four magical weapons first used to kill Estoroth – yawn) and fighting the monsters found therein. Oh, and casting a few spells and mapping the dungeon along the way. There are keys to unlock doors, clues in the form of scrolls and plaques, switches that alter the maze-like dungeon, new clothing, weapons and armour to be found, and... that's about it really.

As progress is made, the characters gain experience in the form of points which basically makes them harder and allows those capable of casting spells to use more powerful ones. Of course, this all boils down to a glorified maze exploration.

(I... li... ayayay!) As is the case with almost all adventures of this type, you must have a blank formatted disk before you can get anywhere. But this task has to be done aside from the *Black Crypt* program. Why, I don't know. It would make so much more sense to include some form of in-built format facility, especially when the program's as fussy as *Black Crypt* – if the disk isn't called 'GAMESAVE', the program doesn't want to know. More irritating is the fact that only two save positions are available per GAMESAVE disk.

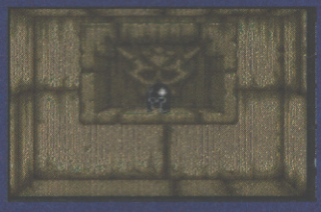
Thankfully, there isn't a great deal of figure-fiddling required before play begins (see ENTER THE BLACK CRYPT below). There is however far too much disk swapping involved before the dungeon is entered, which is even more surprising given that *Black Crypt* is for machines with one megabyte or more of memory. And when the adventure does begin... well, what a disappointment. *Black Crypt* doesn't look much different from its stablemates at all (see WHAT'S WHAT IN THE BLACK CRYPT to the left, for a description of the screen layout).

The mouse-driven point and click interface used to play isn't overly fluid to use, but it's far from →

The *Black Crypt* guide to constipation. (*That's quite enough toilet humour – Ed*)

TAKING IN SOME OF ITS FINER POINTS ALONG THE WAY...

Oh look – a switch. Throwing it is met with a rumble, which means something's happened in the dungeon. It doesn't take long to discover that it's opened up a hidden area containing a pair of Gauntlets, which Eric's now wearing, and another switch, which we duly threw. Aaiiee! – we were hit from behind by something. It's another 'thing'. And it's throwing up nasty burning things (must have been a bad pint).



That last ruck took it out of my boys so it's time for some nosh and a quick kip to heal them (this malarkey of performing mundane tasks such as eating really sucks). It transpires that that switch also opened up another hidden area, where we found a Glyph Scroll, a Water Skin and a Helmet, which was just about big enough to fit Eric's head. There's also a dark pit which probably leads to... down there!

We walked around some more and found a Heart Key, a leg of Meat, some Cheese, a Scroll Of Life (for bringing back the dead), and an Old Scroll which says that "OGREBLADE IS CURSED". We also bumped into this sparkling obstruction which appeared in the corridor. We threw everything everyone had at it but to no avail. As a last resort I walk my naked party into it... It disappeared, along with most of the boys' Hit Points.

The Heart Key worked! Through the door we had a scrap with another old tart out for a good time, which didn't die easily, but when it did everyone except Mike, for some reason, went 'up a level', as they say. This means that the guys capable of using magic have more spells at their disposable. Anyway, we found this watering hole and bashed yet another 'thing'. Eric took a bad hit, but the boy Mike done good and 'went up a level'.

THE FOUR GUILDS

A party of adventurers is put together by drawing on the four guilds. Each guild has plus points and weaknesses. Together they should build up to a balanced team.

Guild Of Clerics – The nancy boys tarnish their hard man image by following the priesthood also. Still, they know how to make the most of healing, protection and defensive spells, and they wield a pretty mean blunt weapon.

Guild Of Druids – How sweet! These guys love living things, which is why their healing powers are second to none. Druids can handle their spells but aren't so hot with metal weapons as they affect their magic powers.

Guild Of Fighters – These hard men know how to handle themselves in a ruck, which is why they often make the best party leaders (just like Paddy Ashdown who used to be in the army).

Guild Of Magicians – The dreary intellectuals of any group – just like Paul Daniels, they have the power to make even the most interesting magic seem deadly dull.

cumbersome. It appears to be based on the ageing *Dungeon Master* system, which wasn't wholly original in itself but effective enough, I guess, for its time. Personally I never liked it much. I'm sure that with a little thought a more user friendly system could be developed.

I also think that a lot more could be done to generate that all-important sense of atmosphere. *Black Crypt*'s dungeon mainly lacks it due to its look and the way it's presented. The character portraits barely rise above functional – and, to my surprise, there are no chicks to choose. The variety of monsters is not wide and none of them seem out of the ordinary. Their animations are simple, the attacking moves being especially weak. In fact the fighting as a whole is not strong – it's essentially little more than a matter of repeated mouse clicks.

Sound isn't put to exceptional use either. A few grunts and groans and growls accompany the fighting action. More impressive (and almost atmospheric) is the fact that the volume of any particular sound varies depending on its distance from the party.

"There is far too much disk swapping involved"

Other faults? Well, the title sequence is dull, and the accompanying music is unsuitable rubbish. The death of the party is met with an unimaginative text message: "SADLY, YOUR PARTY HAS FAILED TO STOP THE RETURN OF ESTOROTH. HIS CONQUEST OF THE LAND OF ASTERA IS QUICK AND BRUTAL." I just hope there's a more impressive congratulatory end sequence.

(I... like... ridingmyredbicycle). Just to emphasise how weak much of this is, the game *Black Crypt* kept reminding me of more than anything as I played it was Lucasfilm Games' ancient *The Eidolon*, and that was much more atmospheric. It was scary, it really was. The sound of an approaching monster would grow louder as it drew near, but you couldn't quite pinpoint where it was coming from until it was almost on top of you. The fighting was no more complex then *Black Crypt*'s but it was far more rewarding – a frantic exchange of fireballs complete with suitable sounds and lots of sparks. And yet, and yet, there's something about this new game...

To be honest, I may not be the best person to judge, as *Black Crypt* is the first adventure of this type I have really persevered with. Everything else has left me cold, and yet – though it didn't immediately grab me – as *Black Crypt*'s all-round tackiness was forgotten it somehow managed to draw me in and keep me there. I quickly found myself excusing its flaws, and despite the lack of atmosphere there was a healthy feeling that progress was being made. Not once did I reach the stage where I thought 'Now what?', and that impresses me. (I...) I LIKE *BLACK CRYPT*! There. I said it. Now that's either a reflection of how sick, twisted and sad an individual I have become or to the fact that, beneath it all, it's actually a rather absorbing and playable game.

● *GARY PENN*

UPPERS It doesn't take much effort to get into it, and once you have, there are a fair few (samey) locations to visit and some decent puzzles to solve. The feeling that progression has been made is strong, and there's nothing overtly frustrating encountered during play either.

DOWNERS It's aesthetically unremarkable, atmosphere is lacking (though not absent) and the playability and point and click interface offer nothing new. It's not so much that there's anything that dreadfully wrong with it, just that there's nothing to write home about either.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Its parts are individually ordinary and yet together they somehow manage to entertain and enthrall to a large extent. A fine Fantasy Role Playing romp which will please both novice and veteran. It may even convert a few cynics, like me.

85 PERCENT

THE BLACK CRYPT TOUR CONTINUES

Oh look – a colourful but impenetrable barrier. And another one. And another one. Throwing a switch creates yet another one, which we walked through. Behind the barrier we found a Scroll Of Dispelling holding three spells, one of which had to be used to remove the magic barrier we'd just passed through. Dispelling one of the other barriers we found a War Hammer to replace Eric's Mace because he was jealous of Mike's.

We went back to check out a turning we'd missed before and it lead to a door. Following a bit of barney with another 'thing', we stumbled upon these dots on the floor. Stepping on them didn't hurt one bit. It was in fact a switch which opened a nearby door leading to an alcove. Inside there was some groovy Leather Armour for Eric and another handy Water Skin – now everyone in the team has one.

Following the corridor we passed a turn off (which turned out to be a one way street) and ended up being turned through 180 degrees when we reached a corner. We ignored this possible warning and continued, picking up some Meat along the way, only to end up in a dead end. With our return blocked, we could only go down. Would anyone ever see the Bitmaps again. There was only one way to find out...

OOOF! The lads all lost Hit Points in the fall, but they cheered up no end when we found some Leather Leggings, another Back Pack (this one with a warning Scroll inside) and a Death Gem. But then we heard this CLOMP sound get louder and louder and this big geezer appeared. He looks like a right party pooper who wouldn't share his beer and birds even if he had some. No-one wanted to be a dead hero, so we legged it.

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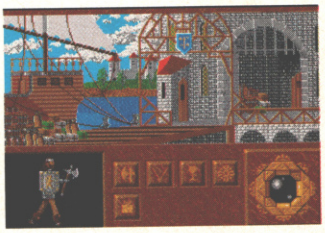
ABANDON

Game: Abandoned Places
Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Author: Artgames
Price: £29.99
Release: Out now

From Hungary – of all places – comes maybe the biggest role

Character generation is as simple as it comes – just pick a face and give it a name.

Here's the type of friendly chap you'll meet when trading. (Erm, five of those please!)



The game world is liberally stuffed with jolly little cities, just like this one.

It says here on the box that "*Abandoned Places* is the new standard in role playing". Such a statement, considering the successes of Mirrorsoft's *Dungeon Master* and SSI's *Eye of the Beholder*, necessarily heralds something pretty damn special if it's to mean anything more than mere hype. A quick look at the game reveals many similarities to its forebears – cell movement, party formation *et al* – but you rapidly get the feeling that there's more going on than meets the eye.

The game's five disks give a hint of the hugeness – a quick glance at the world map shows we're looking at more than just a quick wander down some paltry dragon-filled pit here.

The story goes that we are plunged into the troubled world of Kalynthia where, as one would expect from a D&D-alike scenario, an ancient evil is thought to be re-awakening. And, as is the norm with insomniac ancient evils, terrible creatures are once more abroad and creating a damn good excuse for a posse of adventurers to wander about the place slaughtering them.

Luckily for the Kalynthians, a bunch of heroes were frozen in stone a few hundred years back and are now just itching for another pop at arch magi Bronagh, the chap causing all the bother. There are eight heroes to choose from but, because the local wizards have been a little too laid back of late, there's only enough sorcery spare to resurrect four of them – a damn peculiar coincidence considering the fantasy game designer's usual predilection for four-member parties.

Character generation is a simple affair; you can rename each member chosen and, er, that's it. The manual advises that each character has particular abilities that will unfold as the game progresses, but you're left completely in the dark as to what they are until it's too late and your happy band has already sallied forth. Oh well, at least you've got time to sit back and appraise them once the game proper starts.

Actually, that last sentence was a complete lie – it's no messing and straight into the action, as a bunch of fire-breathing nasties appear immediately the party is free of the crypt. Bereft of all weaponry, armour and provisions, the heroes literally have to slap the monsters up with their bare hands to escape.

This being the case, you have to become pretty adept with the control panel very quickly – not an easy thing to do. The characters, their statistics, magic capabilities, positioning relative to other party members and their possessions are all accessed from the main screen, which makes for some frantic mouse manipulation as you try to move them about and get them slapping. It's been said that the multiple screens of *EOTB* and *Dungeon Master* are a hindrance when trying to get your party organised, but whopping the whole lot – statistics, inventories, the works – around the main viewscreen, as here, makes the interface far too complex.

So, burned, bruised and bleeding – and that's not just my mouse hand – our battered bunch eventually emerge from the catacombs beneath the castle of Heaven's Light and into the outside world, having picked up a few useful oddments that will help them fare in wider Kalynthia. And this is where *Abandoned Places* departs from the run-of-the-mill dungeon adventure. Rather than providing one huge underground complex that has to be thoroughly delved, level by level, to complete the game, *Places* offers a chance to go walkabout in the great outdoors. However, unlike in Mindscape's similar *Knightmare*, what you do above ground is every bit as important as your endeavours below. There are towns and cities in which to trade and gather information, there are other dungeons scattered about and there are loads of monsters to bash on the way. In fact, with more than 100 levels divided among 36 dungeons and a whole heap of

"Electronic Zoo reckons that it takes two months to play"

Oh lordy, it's the evil Bronagh having a quick kip before ravaging the world...

...but never fear – a bunch of Bronagh-bashing heroes are brought onto the case!

ED PLACES

-player ever seen. But is it any good?

settlements to visit, you could feasibly spend days just wandering, horse riding, boating or even flying (oh yes, these wizards are tricksy with their spells) around Kalynthia in search of firepower sufficient to rid the world of evil.

THE BIGGEST ROLE PLAYER YET?

To cope with the overground adventure, there's a second interface featuring a scrolling map of the surrounding terrain and an icon panel below which enables you to decide such group actions as making camp, choosing modes of travel, searching, trading and generally moving in interesting ways. A small animated figure reminds you of what you're doing at any one time and it too moves in an interesting way, which brings me to one major downer – the game's graphics.

"The game's five disks give a hint of hugeness"

The screens veer from fairly bog standard stills of town scenes to very 8-bit-ish screens when fighting. The animation is similarly lacklustre. Agreed, it would be pushing it to expect some kind of rotoscoped extravaganza, but when a figure adopts the mincing strut of someone in need of Diar-eze, it somewhat knackers one's credulity – credulity being hefty prerequisite for embarrassment-free fantasy role playing. Perhaps I've been spoiled by the panache of *Eye Of The Beholder* and similar's graphics, but when so much effort has been put into every other aspact of something as huge as *Abandoned Places*, it seems a shame that it's so completely outgunned in such a very important area.

Gripes about grotty graphics aside, the whole thing stands up well gameplay-wise. It's hard enough – both in terms of fighting and getting your head around the scale of the plot – to make it a challenge. There's just so much to be done to achieve the threefold aim of this utterly agoraphobic experience. First, get out of Heaven's Light and build up the party – you'll find oddments of treasure for buying those essentials that can't be found just lying around. Second, go questing for the items – a sword, an orb and a globe – that will have you crowned King of the World. There's quite a bit of legwork involved here and plenty of opportunity for meeting monsters in the wild, should you want to (the map screen reverts to the underground interface for a quick scrap or two), and, indeed, for exploring some of those aforementioned 'abandoned places'.

The game is structured so you'll collect sufficient experience, hit points, spells and magical devices to meet the final conflict well prepared, and boy you'll need them. Bronagh is not the sort of chap to takes things lying down and, when the moment is right – boof! You're teleported into the Halls of Rage to face a pretty awesome test before dealing with the man himself. (And no – I'm not going to make it that easy. There's no way I'm telling what the test is.)

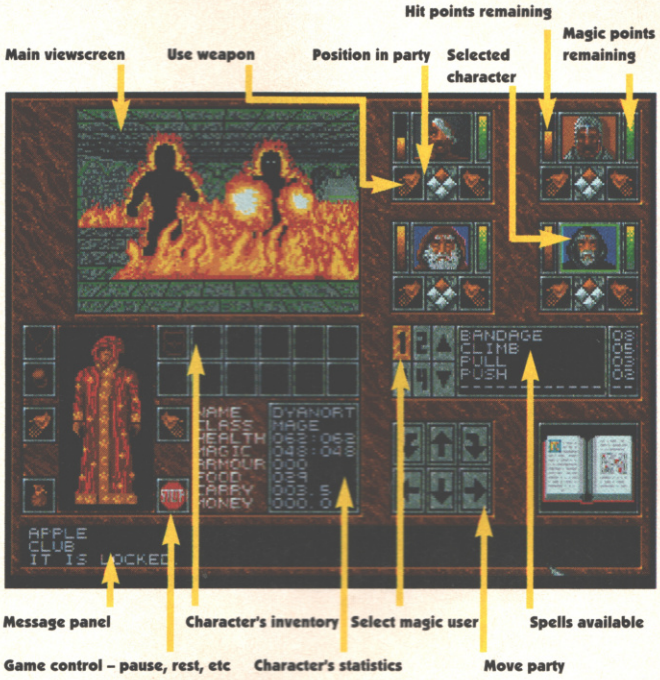
Electronic Zoo reckons the final stage of *Places* is as big as the whole of either *Dungeon Master* or *EOTB* and that the game will take you at least two months to play. I am inclined to believe it. Having made my way across leagues of Kalynthia and engaged in numerous subterranean sorties, I'm still daunted at how much there actually is is left to do.

Abandoned Places may not represent the new standard in RPGs – it's a bit too scrappy in certain areas for that – but you can bet your bottom dollar it'll be responsible for a great many hours of lost sleep among the die-hard D&D fraternity.

● *KARL FOSTER*

ABANDONED PLACES: COPING WITH MISSION ONE

Your first foray into *Abandoned Places* will put you in touch with these unsavoury fire elementals, so it's a good idea to become rapidly au fait with the control panel...



ABANDON THE RUN: MAGIC USING IN ABANDONED PLACES

Aspirant mages should get quite a kick out of *Abandoned Places*, as there's some awesome firepower to be wielded. Like this...

Characters start out with a selection of low-level spells but, as the party's magician and priest advance in level, you'll have the chance to blow seven bells out of the opposition.

The magic capabilities of each character are listed on the statistics screen – just scroll through an ever expanding list of incantations, select and abra-kerflop! You'll be told you're out of points. Yep, there's a price to be paid in the form of magic points, which are accumulated through experience and can be regenerated by having a quick kip.

There's also and abundance of arcane artefacts. The staff of fireball crisps a good yardage of enemy occupation – just be careful not to use it in a confined space. (OK, so I nearly totalled the whole party – could've sworn it wasn't loaded.) And then there are staffs of lightning strike, wands of web, magic swords, armour; all the latest quality accessories for today's dungeoneer. Go carefully, however. The game is designed so you'll collect what you need for the final showdown, which saves a lot of backtracking for that knick-knack you thought was a plain old knapsack, but was actually the fabled Plain Old Knapsack of Zorp. Take care with your magic items and you won't be caught with your vorpal trousers down.

UPPERS You can't deny that it's absolutely massive – like phew! You'll be lost in it for *ages*. It'll have RPG fans roleing in the aisles for many an hour and give them fore-arms like Arnie's – it's mouse-driven you know.

DOWNERS Poor graphics and animation detract from the playing experience, while owners of single-drive Amigas will get somewhat peeved at the number of disk swaps.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I would have liked a little more gloss on the graphics and a tad more finesse on the control system, but the D&D enthusiast will find it a reet riveting role.

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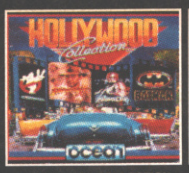

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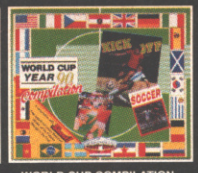

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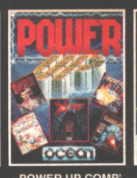

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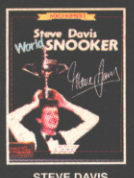

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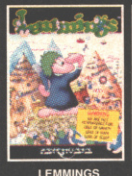

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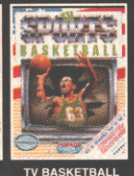

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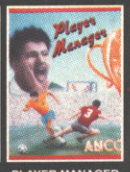

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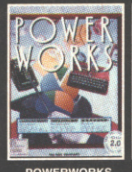

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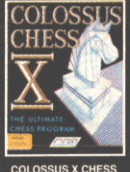

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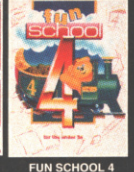

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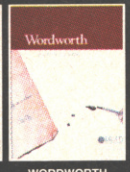

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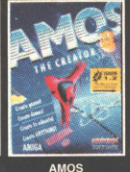

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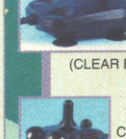

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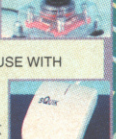

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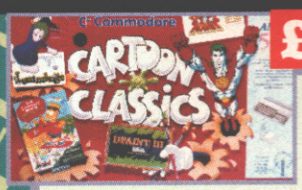

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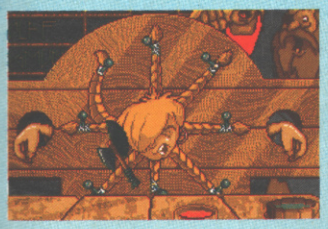
HEIMDALL
(Core Design)

A tip for the absent minded: if you've just been killed and omitted to save the game beforehand, and you'd like to restore all your weapons, magic and crew members, Andrew Brown of Bordon suggests the following...



Go to the Save Game option at the beginning of the game (the one with attribute options). When it tells you to insert your saved game disk, click on 'No' and you'll be back in the Items screen with everything you had before you were killed.

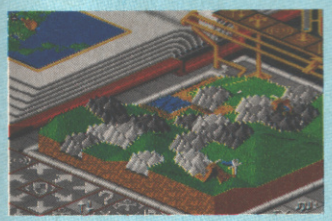
Part of the axe-throwing sub-game from *Heimdall* – happily the bloody original version was taken out before release.

LEANDER
(Psygnosis)

A quickie from Robert Hazelby and Richard Pountney of Bristol – some codes.

Level 2 – ZXSP
Level 3 – LVFT

POPULOUS
(Electronic Arts)



***Populous* – cheat modes a-go-go!**

In AP8 we challenged you to find a cheat for *Populous*. The response was, quite frankly, devastating. While nobody appears to have found Bullfrog's built-in cheat mode, just about all of you seem to have discovered an alternative that does just as well. Here's Robert Smith of Birmingham, first off the mark and therefore the winner of a copy of *Populous II*.

First, load the Conquest Game as usual, and click on the Game Setup icon. Then select Custom Game and go to Game Options, changing anything you like. Finally, click on Evil, then Two Players, and then Cancel. The enemy will now be unable to alter the landscape, preventing him from making any progress.

TERMINATOR 2
(Ocean)

T1000's steely composure doesn't scare Mike Castro of Bournemouth – he's found a cheat. Pause the game by pressing P, and then press all the function keys down together. After unpausing, pressing Escape will skip to the next level.

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II
(Gremlin)

Priding ourselves on absolute perfection in everything we do, we were somewhat taken aback when a couple of people had the audacity to suggest that we'd come a cropper with our *Lotus II* codes in AP8. Actually, it was more like several thousand people, leading us to believe that a couple of typos must have crept in between our elaborate testing process and the printers.

Here, then, are the correct codes...

TWILIGHT Night Course
PEA SOUP Fog Course
THE SKIDS Snow Course
PEACHES Desert Course
LIVERPOOL Motorway Course
BAGLEY Marsh Course
E BOW Storm Course

COMPLETE control

Some changes to Complete Control this month. Gary 'hello birds, hello trees' Penn is moving on (he'll be doing more programmer interviews and similar for us instead) and the 'dream team' of Matthew Squires and Jonathan Davies are taking over. Check out JD's new regular section-within-a-section The Last Resort, for instance – a brand new q uestions and answers column. If you're stuck on a game, Jon's your man – and if he can't help you out, perhaps one of the AMIGA POWER readers can.

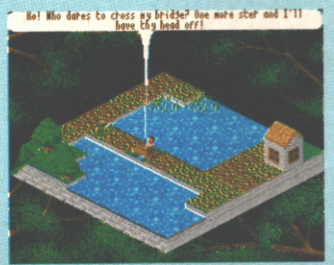
AMNIOS
(Psygnosis)

The codes, courtesy of Lloyd Burley of Aycliffe Village:

FRDSNSMNGR – Level 2
PLFRMNLQSN – Level 3
LSNBRGNSLQ – Level 4
LKMCTKSCDF – Level 5
STBNLMRCHL – Level 6
RCHLMCLTHS – Level 7
THBSTSTFTT – Level 8
THTHJJRSNN – Level 9
MLFNDBTFLL – Level 10
BTTMNDHRCH – Last level

ROBIN HOOD
(Millennium)

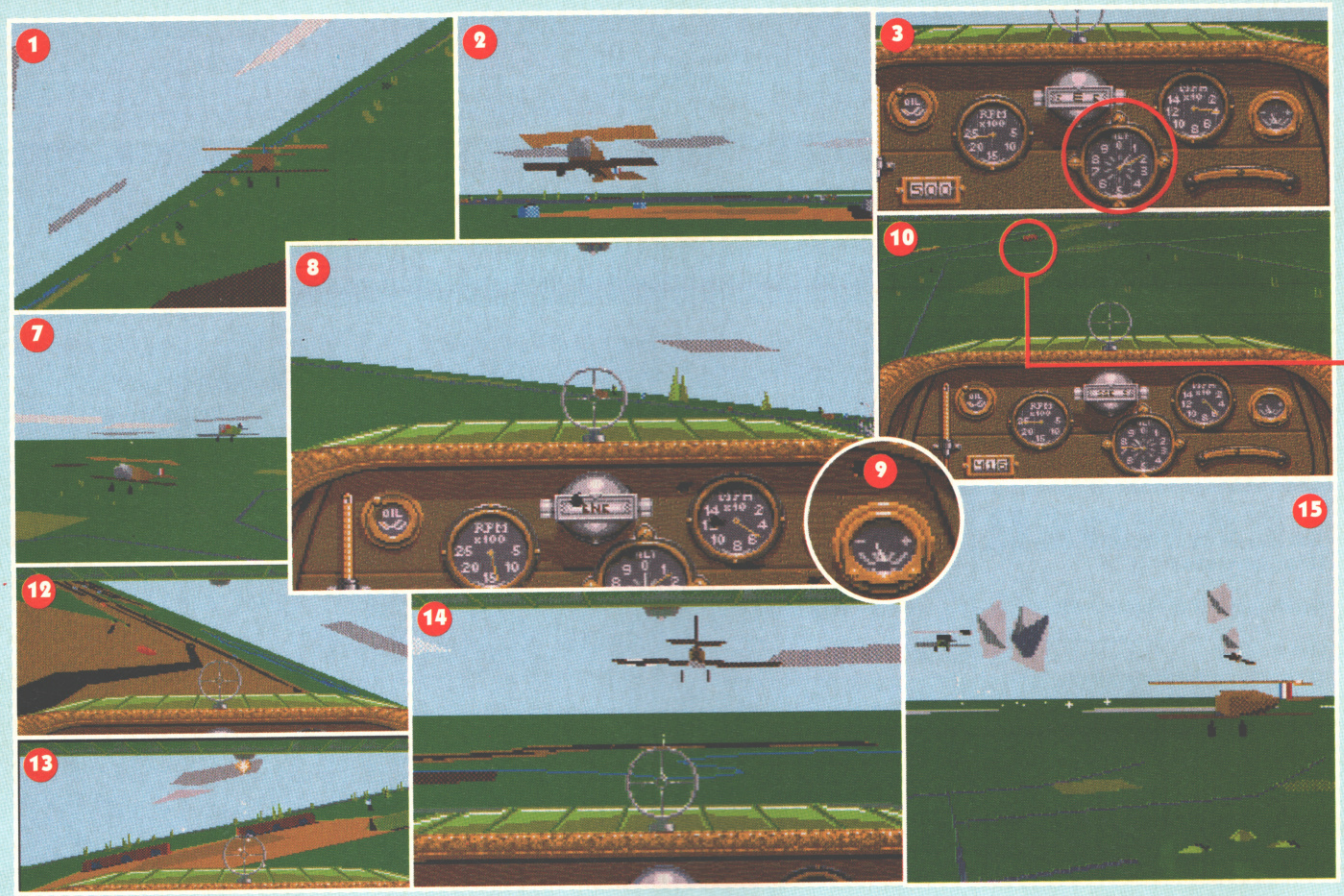
Your men'll be a great deal merrier if you take advantage of the following cheats, supplied by Chris Hughes of Harrogate.



***Robin Hood* – Little John stars with our man in the famous bridge fight scene.**

Press the Alt key and then type one of the following:

370 – Outlaw stag hunting
371 – Outlaw Robin Hood
372 – Outlaw merry men
373 – Put a price on Robin's head
441 – Cycle through seasons
213 – Move to island near Little John
214 – Move to spring near wizard
659 – Make merry men join up
103 – Make Marion fall in love with Robin
166 – Maximum heroism
167 – Minimum heroism
828 – Legalise Robin Hood
666 – Cause a church service



KNIGHTS O

It was the most atmospheric and playable flight sim of 1991. This month we take pilot in MicroProse's wizard crate-packed classic – for sheer flying fun, this leaves

FLYING

1 Don't oversteer when flying your plane. Controlled graceful turns will keep a target in sight. Save all violent actions for the emergency evasive manoeuvres you'll find are needed when trying to shake an enemy off your tail.

2 Don't try to climb too steeply. Remember, a lot of the planes that took part in WW1 did well to simply stay in the air! Find the stall point of the plane you are flying and keep the nose below that point. You'll notice that speed is the first thing that is sacrificed when you try to gain altitude, so you're best advised to climb steadily and keep your speed up.

3 Altitude is a critical factor in most encounters. Use the quiet periods when there are no enemy planes around to gain height so you'll have the upper hand when your next dog fighting encounter takes place.

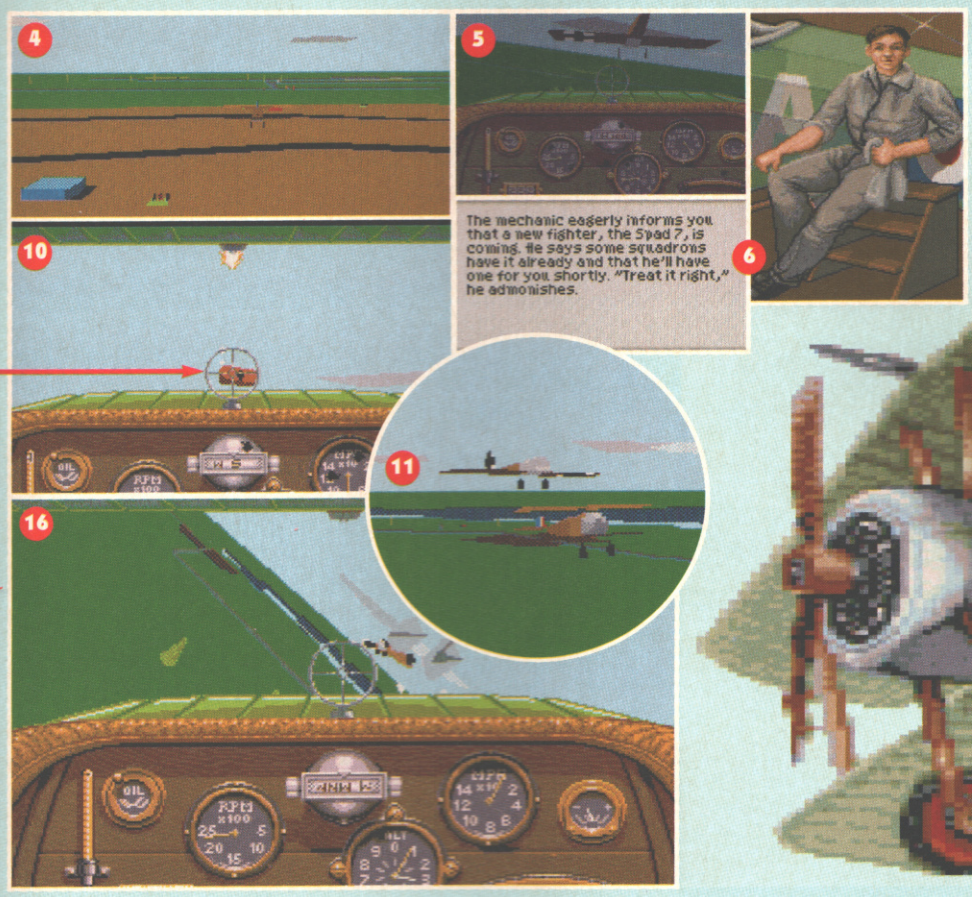
4 Flying high or low gives you the best chances when crossing the trenches. If you fly at a tricky 'middle' altitude you are far more likely to be hit by AA fire.

5 Practice the various manoeuvres documented in the manual. This is vital if you are to make it through the war and become Ace Of Aces.

6 Keep an eye on what planes are available in the hangar. The Spad 7 is a very useful plane and becomes available fairly soon in the war. Later, in 1917, the Spad 13 makes its debut. This is the fastest of all planes that saw service in WW1. Although you won't go far wrong with either of the Spads, you'd do well to try all the planes in flight training, as everyone has his or her favourite. Some are fast but others may be more agile.

7 Make full use of the F2/(shift) F2 function, as this will give you advance warning of an enemy fighter attacking.

8 Keep one eye on your fuel gauge as it's no fun getting stranded behind enemy lines – there's no guarantee that you'll make it back alive! Make full use of allied aerodromes as refuelling, rearming and repairing points. Having landed at a base, switch your engine off. Say no to the 'End this mission' prompt and switch your engine back on. You will find the ground crew have done what they can to get you flying again. They won't be able to repair any damage to your dials and gauges



F THE SKY

a good look at the do's and don'ts of being a successful World War One fighter most jet-based sims languishing back in the hangar. Jolly good show, chaps!

though. This is also an important point to remember if you are playing head to head with a friend.

11 To help in locating enemy planes, don't forget to keep an eye out for any shadows they cast. Although a plane might be on your trail, you may not be able to see it – by watching the shadow, you can work out roughly where he is.

GROUND TARGET

12 You will find ground targets easier to hit if you reduce your speed on the approach for your strafing run.

13 Enemy plane generation will be severely reduced if you manage to destroy some enemy hangars, two of which are located on each aerodrome. They take quite a few direct hits before they blow up though, so direct your strafing run along their length rather than attacking their front or back because, as our man found out, it's far less awkward and uses a lot less of your lead.

DOG FIGHTING

When dogfighting with one or more enemy planes it is important to remember the following points:

14 Flying straight at an enemy plane with him heading for you is not as bad a situation as it might at first appear, especially if you have a small altitude advantage. You will quite often take him out on your first pass but, should you just damage him or miss altogether, turn as tightly as you can, making full use of your rudder. Unless you are up against a top-quality enemy pilot you should be able to out-turn him and gun him down on your second pass.

15 If you lose sight of an enemy plane while dogfighting, make use of the F2/(shift)F2 facility to quickly locate your target once more. (You could find yourself in real trouble otherwise).

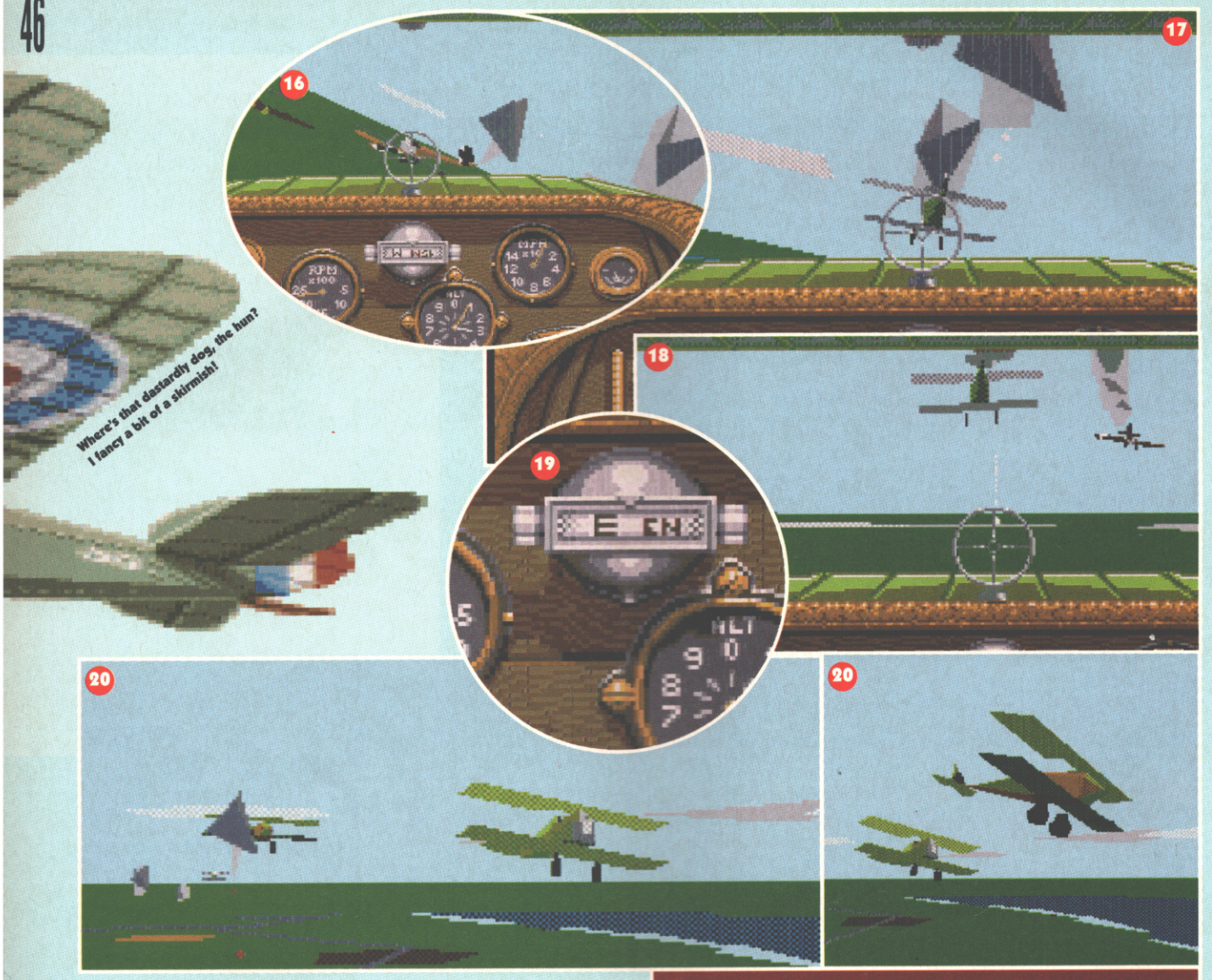
16 If you are tracking an enemy plane that's in mid-turn, remember to aim well ahead of the target so the bullets reach the spot you expect him to occupy rather than the one he's in now. As both of the insets (here and over the page) show, our ace did exactly that and bagged himself another hun.

17 If you are on the tail of an enemy plane that's in fairly level flight, aim above the target so that the natural arc of your bullets take them to their intended destination. Once you've mastered the flight controls and learnt a few manoeuvres to get that hun exactly where you want him, peppering his tail with lead will become second nature.

18 It is often better to reduce your throttle setting to about 70 percent when dogfighting to give you more control over manoeuvring and allow you to 'sit' on your opponent's tail.

19 When you are free of enemy planes, time how long it takes you to do a full 360 degree turn at a given throttle setting. This will prove useful when dogfighting, as you will be able to count out a 360 degree turn rather than have to keep one eye on your compass – assuming, of course, you still have use of the compass anyway!

20 If you have an enemy plane on your tail, don't always rely on a simple banking manoevre to shake him off. There are plenty of alternatives documented in the manual. The Fokker bounce might serve well in turning the tables, giving you the chance to pepper your enemy's rear with lead, for instance – or why not invent a trick of your own? We thought up our own 'topgunning' →



ploy – pulling back on the throttle, and dropping altitude slightly with the hun on our tail, so he overshoots immediately in front of us and becomes a sitting duck – in seconds. Try it – as you can see in the pics above, it works every time.

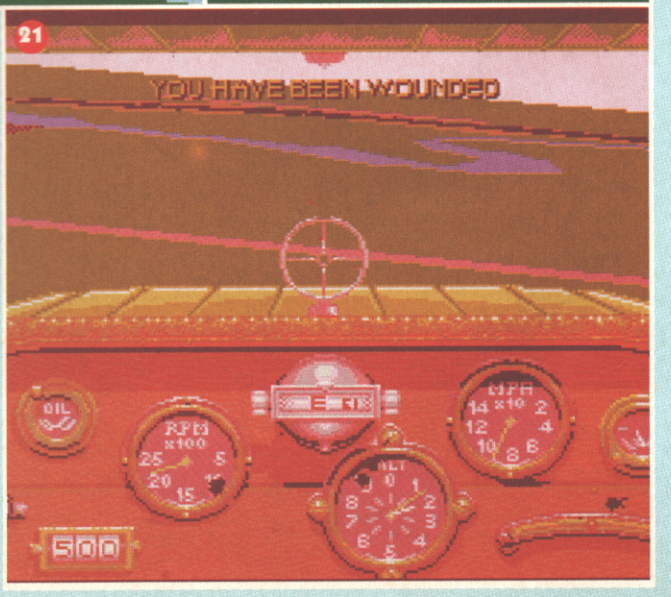
If you join a dogfight, be careful to take out only the enemy planes(!) – you'll have your stripes ripped off and be flogged in the officer's mess with no ginger beer for a week if you're spotted having a go at an allied plane. There's no excuse for it, you know – you should soon be able to recognise the different colourings and markings.

DAMAGE SURVIVAL

21 Various parts of your plane can be damaged when you are hit by enemy fire. Damage to most surfaces and instruments is progressive – to begin with you will probably only suffer the minor stuff. When a surface gets wrecked like the ailerons or your rudder, for example, it will make that aspect of the plane difficult to keep in check and under control, but often not impossible. Similarly, if your engine takes a couple of direct hits, you may still be able to limp home – just rather more slowly than you might like! When you suffer serious damage like this you should consider heading for the nearest allied aerodrome. If you feel that you're unlikely to make it, a landing anywhere in allied territory is better than nothing.

Should you take a hit yourself and get wounded, you're best advised to head groundwards in an attempt to end the mission before another bullet finishes you off. When you're wounded you're far more likely to crash than before – even without anyone taking pot shots at you – so you basically want to get down to terra firma as fast as possible. And that's about it really. Happy flying! ●

Thanks to Scott Johnson and Kevin Buckner of MicroProse for their help.



OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS!

(Psygnosis)

With a humbling turn of speed, Matthew Dineen of Lincoln has vanquished all however-many-it-is lemming-filled levels and produced a complete set of codes. Hurrah!

TAME LEVELS

1 Down And Out Lemmings (No code)
2 Rent-a-Lemming IISTEHCCAQ
3 Undercover Lemming LRTDLCADAO
4 Downwardly Mobile Lemmings RTDLCILEAH
5 Snuggle up to a Lemming TDLCAHTFAO
6 Intsy-Wintsy...Lemming? DLCIHVTGAJ
7 Who's that Lemming? LCALVTDHAG
8 Dangerzone CILVTDLIAP
9 And now this... CAHRUDLJAR
10 New Lemmings On The Block IHRUDLCKAK
11 With Compliments MPVDLCALAG
12 Citizen Lemming RUDLCILMAQ
13 Thunder-Lemmings are go! WDHCAHTNAF
14 Get a little extra help DLCIHTUOAG
15 Not just a pretty Lemming LCALVUDPAP
16 Gone with the Lemming CILVWLHQAO
17 Honey, I Saved The Lemmings CAHRTFLBBL
18 Lemmings for Presidents IHRTFLCCBE
19 Lemming Productions Present... MRVNLBADBL
20 Custom built for Lemmings RUNLBIMEBE

CRAZY LEVELS

1 Quote "That's a good level" TFLCAHTFBR
2 Dolly Dimple GLCIHUTGBM
3 Many Lemmings make level work LCCLWTFHBM
4 Lemming Express CKLTTGLIBD
5 24 hour Lemathan CAHSUFLJBF
6 The Stack IHSUFLCKBO
7 And now, the end is near... LRUFLCCLBM
8 KEEP ON TRUCKING RUFNCKLMBH
9 On the Antarctic Coast WNHCGHWNBJ
10 ROCKY VI FLCKHVUOBW
11 No Problemming! LCCMUUGPBF
12 Lemming Friendly BMMTWFHQBL
13 It's a trade off CCIPTEMBCN
14 Time waits for no Lemming KHRTDMCCCG
15 Worra load of old blocks! LQTDMCADCQ
16 Across The Gap QTDMCKLECL
17 DIGGING FOR VICTORY TEMCCHVFCG
18 NO PROBLEM DMCKIUTGCO
19 DON'T PANIC KCCMVVLHCE
20 Ice Ice Lemming CKMTVMKICM

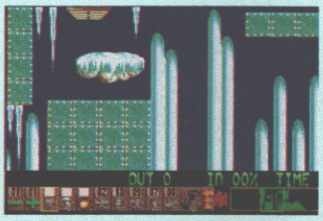
WILD LEVELS

1 PoP YoR ToP!!! CGHPUDIJCE
2 Lemming Hotel MIQWMICKCI
3 Lemming Rhythms LRWEICELCN
4 Meeting Adjourned PUMICIMMCH
5 Lemming Head UEMCCHWNCQ
6 Just A Quicky LICOIWUOCR
7 You Take The High Road MCALVUEPCD
8 It's a tight fit! CKLWUEMQCP
9 Ice Station Lemming CAHRTGMBDP
10 Higgledy Piggledy KHRTFMCCDJ
11 Mutiny On The Bounty MRTNICEDDN
12 SNOW JOKE QTFMCIMEDN
13 ONWARD AND UPWARD TGMCAHTFDF
14 ICE SPY NICMIVVGDK
15 THE SILENCE OF THE LEMMINGS MCELUTGHDQ
16 Take care, sweetie CKLVTOKIDO
17 The Chain with no name CCHSUGMJDL
18 Dr Lemminggood KHSUFMCKDD
19 Lemmingdelica MRUNICCLDE
20 Got anything....Lemmingy??? QUFMCOLMDL

WICKED LEVELS

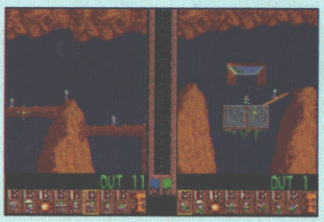
1 LeMming ToMato KetchUp fAcility VFOCCHTNDR
2 Introducing SUPERLEMMING NICIHTWODM
3 This Corrosion OCCLVUGPDK
4 Oh No! It's the 4TH DIMENSION! CKLWUFMQDR
5 Chill out! GCHSTLHBEW
6 PoP Til YoU DrOp! KHRTDLGCEL
7 Last Lemming To Lemmingcentral MPTDHGEDEF
8 A TOWERING PROBLEM RVMHGILEEG
9 How on Earth? VMHGAHWFEQ
10 Temple of Love DLGIHTTGEP
11 ROCKY ROAD NGALUTDHEP
12 Suicidal Tendancies GIMWVLHIEP
13 Almost Nearly Virtual Reality GEHQUELJEN
14 The Lemming Learning Curve KIQWMHGKEL
15 SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, EGG AND LEMMING MPUDLGCLEQ
16 Five Alive PWMHGIMMEO
17 Down the tube VLJGGIUNEN
18 LoTs moRe wHeRe TheY coMe fRom DLGKHUUOEL
19 Up, Down or Round and Round HGELVUMPEQ
20 Lemming Funhouse GKLTWMJQEJ

HAVOC LEVELS



1 Tubular Lemmings GGHPTGNBFK
2 Be more than just a number KIPTFLGCFN
3 It's the price you have to pay LPTGLGADFI
4 The race against cliches STFNGILEFF
5 There's madness in the method TFNGCHVFFP
6 Now get out of that! FLGKHWTGFH
7 Creature Discomforts LGALWTFHFS
8 Lemming about town GOMVVOHIFI
9 AAAAAARRRRRRGGGGGGHHHHHH!!!!!! GAIQUFLJFM
10 Flow Control KHRUFLGKFH
11 Welcome to the party, pal! MSWFJFALFD
12 It's all a matter of timing SUGNGILMFP
13 HIGHLAND FLING UFNGAHWNFH
14 Synchronised Lemming FLGMHTUOFP
15 Have an ice day LGALWUGPFM
16 Scaling the Heights GILTUNJQFH
17 Where Lemmings Dare GCIRVLKBGO
18 Lemmings in a situation KIPTDOGCGP
19 Looks A Bit Nippy Out There LPTDMGEDGL
20 LOok BeFoRe YoU LeAp RTEMGKLEGF

TWO-PLAYER LEVELS



1 The Duel JAHPTDIBKE
2 Match Of The Day IHPTDIJCKN
3 Confrontation LPTDIJADKK
4 The Only Way Out PTDIJILEKD
5 Showdown! TDIJAHTFKM
6 Test Of Skill DIJIHTTGKF
7 Give And ake IJALTTDHKS
8 Co-operation JILTTDIIKL
9 One On One JAHPUDIJKN
10 I Want It All IHPUDIJKKG

OH NO! ANOTHER LEMMING TIP!

Gasp. As Repetitive Strain Injury tightens its hold, here's a further titbit from Milton R Stille of – yes! – Monte-Carlo, Monaco:

WICKED Level 3 (This Corrosion) will complete itself if you leave every Lemming to walk off the edge.

Blimey! Easy or what, eh?

STUMPED?

Then you need...

THE LAST RESORT

with Jonathan Davies

Every month in The Last Resort we'll be attempting to help out with all your gaming conundrums. If you're stuck on a game, this is the place to come. Ladies and gentlemen, your host, Mr Popular himself, it's Jonathan Davies...

I must admit that I've never really done this sort of thing before, so you'll have to bear with me. What we're trying to do here is help you out with the games you're really, really stuck on – you send in the questions and we'll supply the answers, that sort of thing. And if we CAN'T provide the answers then that's okay, we'll print your problem in the magazine and turn it over to the great Amiga game playing public out there – if one of them doesn't know how to do it we'll be very, very surprised. Address your letters to me, Jonathan Davies, at The Last Resort (Questions) or The Last Resort (Answers) – depending on what you're sending me (if there are both in the same envelope put 'Q&A' on it or something) – at AMIGA POWER, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. And now, let the tips begin...

SHADOW OF THE BEAST II

Q "I'm trying to use the crane to smash the boulder and get the remains across to the see-saw, but it keeps ending up in the acid pool. What should I do?"
Ray Turner, Gravesend

A *You're on the right track, of course. It's simply a case of doing the job properly. Having picked up the boulder, move it as far up and right as it'll go, and drop it onto the spike. The resulting small fragment should land on the other side of the pool, from where you can push it onto the see-saw.*

Q "How do I activate the lift without setting the trap off? And how do I open the door in the oasis?"
Tristan Mullett, Bristol

A *Steady! The old 'loaf' isn't as sharp as it used to be. The first question's straightforward enough – if you rescue the chap who's being attacked by a monster and ask him about 'traps' he'll tell you all you need to know. As for the other one, I'm not entirely sure which door you're on about to be honest. I'd suggest you need to find a key, though.*

HEAD OVER HEELS

Q "How on earth do I get Head to climb the ladder?"
Michelle Corney, Ayr

A *Had a bit of trouble with this one myself, actually. As I recall, it's all down to aeronautics. Having jumped onto the first rung of the ladder, you've got to turn round and jump outwards and upwards, and then turn the little beggar around again in mid-air so that he lands on the next rung up. Keep doing that until you get to the top. It's frustrating at first, but easy once you've got the hang of it.*

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Q "Trials one, two and three were quickly done, but looking for a job has spoiled my fun,
No credit can I get without employ,
and I've searched and searched but still no joy."
JW Moore, Chorley

A *Hmm. Well I think you're barking up the wrong tree to be honest, JW. You've pretended you've got a job and asked for credit, presumably, and been refused it, watching your credit note being locked away in the safe. Well, look a bit more closely next time, and note down the combination to the safe. Ask the shopkeeper about the Swordmaster and he'll leave. Open the safe and bingo.*

Q "I can get to MONKEY ISLAND, but I can't actually get off the ship and onto the island. When I try to use the cannon, Guybrush won't get into it."
David Clough, Crosshills

A *It's simply a case of doing everything in the right order. Fill the cannon with gunpowder, light the fuse (which you make out of the rope), pop the pot onto your head and take it from there.*

LOOSE ENDS

Of course, we don't know the answers to everything. The following problems remain unsolved – perhaps you might be able to help? If so, write in to me with the answers without delay..!

Q "In FANTASY WORLD DIZZY, how do you get the last coin – you know, the one in the space where the tree near the hippy is?"
Gemma Cousins, Edesborough

Q "Every time I play MAGIC POCKETS I get onto the third level on World One but I can never complete it. Please help me out."
Kevin Lumsden, London

Q "Could someone tell me which planet to go to after completing Pelphi in CAPTIVE? Or failing that, what the password is to actually get into Pelphi's computer."
Chris Chambers, Kingston

Q "I'm stuck in LEMMINGS, on Tricky Level 26. If it's a question of building zillions of bridges then I obviously haven't persevered for long enough, but the quote at the beginning: "I have a cunning plan", leads me to believe that I must be missing something."
Judy Tryggvason, Norwich

Q "I've been playing KINGS QUEST 5. I've got the custard pie, the coat, the honey and, of course, the wand. I've found the castle and the tents in the desert. And I've been zapped by the witch, who has the golden heart. And that's all I can do. Any help?"
Shane Maunder, Hull

Q "After spending the last week playing ROCKET RANGER solidly, I still can't suss it out. I am unable to collect all five rocket parts before the Leutonians conquer the White House, and have serious hassle with the guard on the 4th rocket part, let alone finding where the 5th is."
Nick Shulman, London

Q "I've completed Level 1 of CADAVER: THE PAYOFF, but need help with Levels 2, 3 and 4. Geeezz, and Part 3 should be out soon (damn)! In Level 2, I read a book that says "1, 2, 2, 1 holds the keys". I still need 7 keys and 6 more rooms to enter. I'm 82 percent done with level 2."
Paul Bagnarol, NY, USA

Q "I'm hopelessly stuck on R-TYPE II's second level. I can get halfway through, but I can't get past the bit where rockets come out of the pools at the bottom of the screen, and then explode into three homing missiles. Anybody got any cheats or hints?"
Joe Slatter, Romford

Q "We're stuck on Mayhem Level 20 in LEMMINGS. Has anyone got the solution?"
Andy and Jane, Isle of Wight

Q "I've been stuck on DEJA VU for ages. I've got the key to the safe, and collected the files (what do you do with them?) and the boot key. There is a fat mother in there with a gag on which I took off, but she doesn't do anything. Help!"
Nicky Fletcher, Leeds

CASES CLOSED

The mighty AMIGA POWER readership certainly knows its earlobe from its elbow when it comes to problem-solving, with two major mysteries cleared up this month alone. If you know the answers to any of the Loose Ends featured this month, don't forget where you're meant to send them!

LEMMINGS

Q DA Sturge of Harbourne was stuck on Mayhem Level 20.

A *"Turn the second lemming to appear into a Blocker trapping the first lemming between it and thepillars.Turn him into a Basher to tunnel through the pillars. Once he's through, turn him into a Builder so that when he reaches the wall across the gap he turns around and walks back towards the Blocker. Turn him into a Miner first though, so that he digs underneath the Blocker, turning him into a Walker again. Let all the lemmings walk to the exit except for the last one. Turn him into a Miner so that the far edge of the bridge is cut away and he falls down to the bottom with the other lemming. Turn both of these into climbers and voila, you've got 100 percent of the lemmings safe and the level completed."*
Andrew Earle, Ferndown

SHADOW OF THE BEAST II

Q Marc Dunkley of Dalkeith was having problems with the password for the Eastern passage.

A *"Having placed the rock on the see-saw (as explained above), jump from the rope and catapult it into the air. Now run to the left and stand on the lift (you only have a couple of seconds before it rises). Kill Ishran and knock down the bag, and the man inside it will give you the required password."*
– Mark Stephens, Chippenham

FINAL FIGHT

Q Steve Swaine of Wakefield was having trouble with FINAL FIGHT.

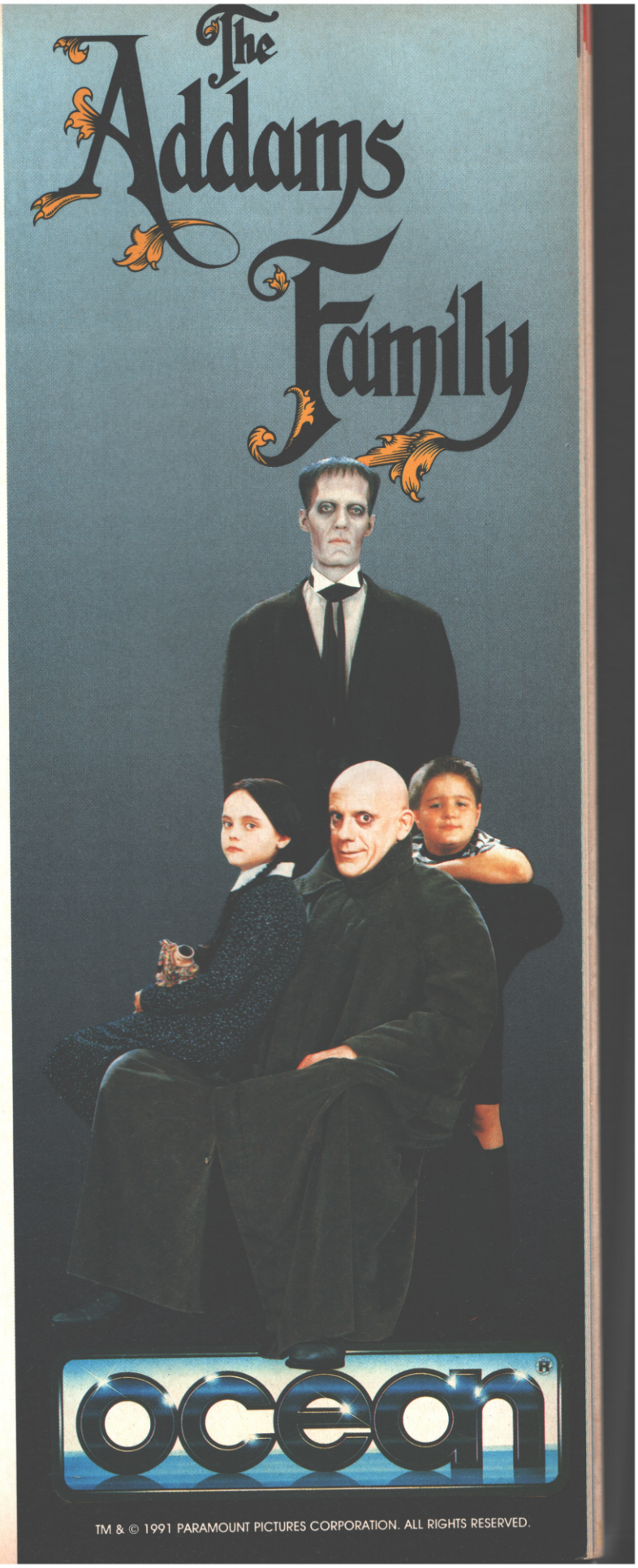
A *"After loading the game, a map of the city comes up. Leave it until the telephone conversation between Mike Haggar and the criminal. When the criminal says 'Switch on your TV', quickly press the Help key and a cheat screen will come up."*
– Robbie James of Hopwood

SWITCHBLADE

Q Russ Brooks from Finsbury Park, London was having problems with *Switchblade II*. Well, we ran a comprehensive cheater's guide in AP8 – and thought we'd managed to get in there just about everything you could possibly want to know about the game – but here's one tip we missed...

A *"Holding down the fire button before turning on the Amiga, and continuing to hold it until the game has started will give you infinite lives".*
– Jasdeep Grewal of Sydney, Australia

If you're not sure which key fits where, who holds the secret of the Magic Cucumber or whether to use a Digger or a Blocker, write and tell me and I'll leave no stone unturned in my search for a solution. And if I don't know the solution, a reader almost certainly will. Or if, on the other hand, you feel your knowledge may be of assistance to one of the distressed readers above, drop me a line with the details. Oh yes, and if you think the name of this column is a direct rip off from the TV programme then you're exactly right, it is – it just seemed to fit, especially since old smoothy himself happens to be a Jonathan too. And anyway, I couldn't think of anything else. Toodle pip!



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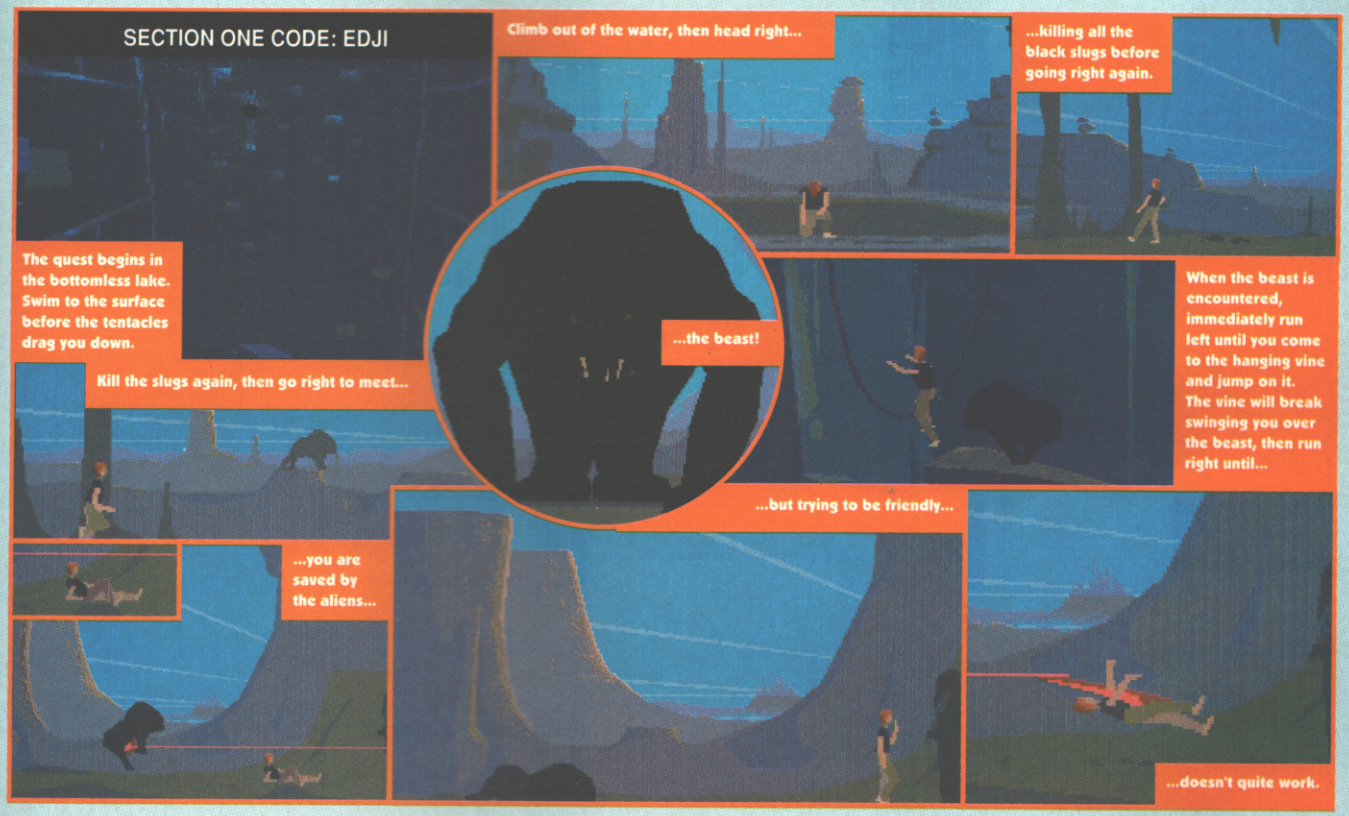
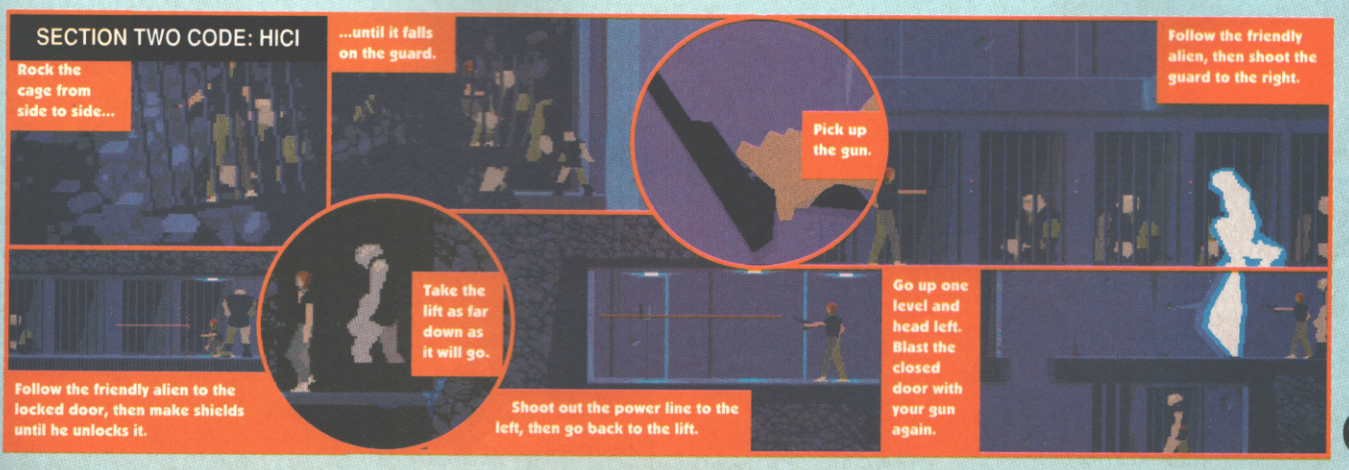
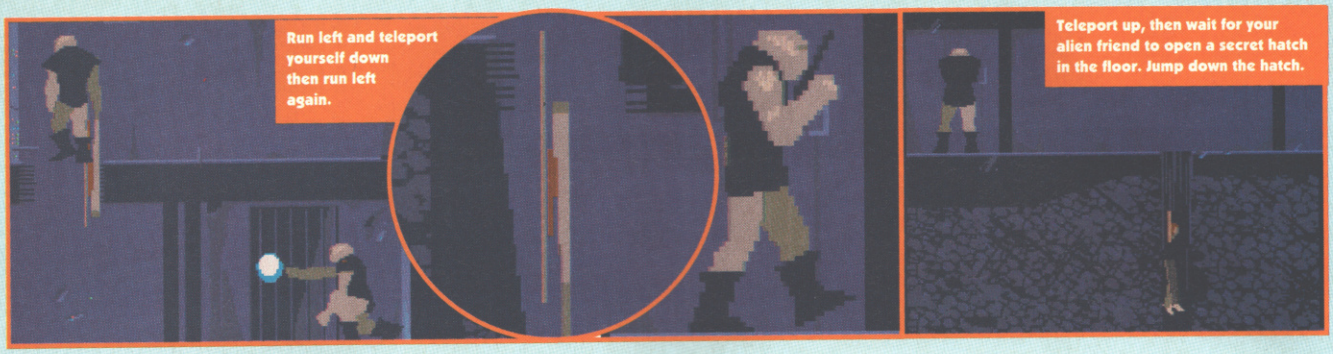
ANOTHER WORLD

It's big, it's beautiful, it's Part One of our solution to Delphine/US Gold's *Another World*, sent to us by Stephen McAllister of Glasgow.







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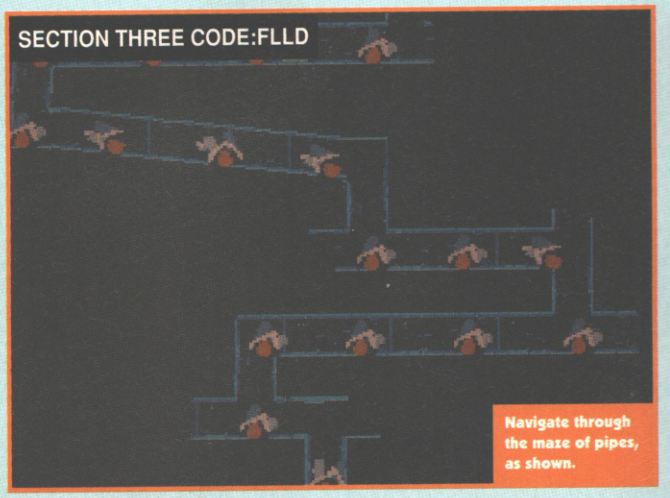

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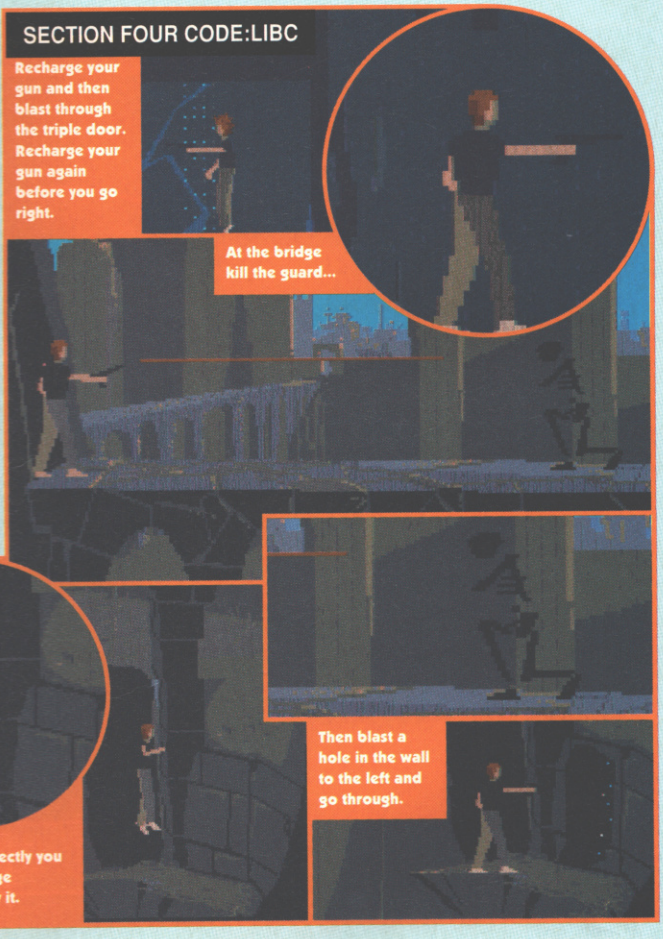

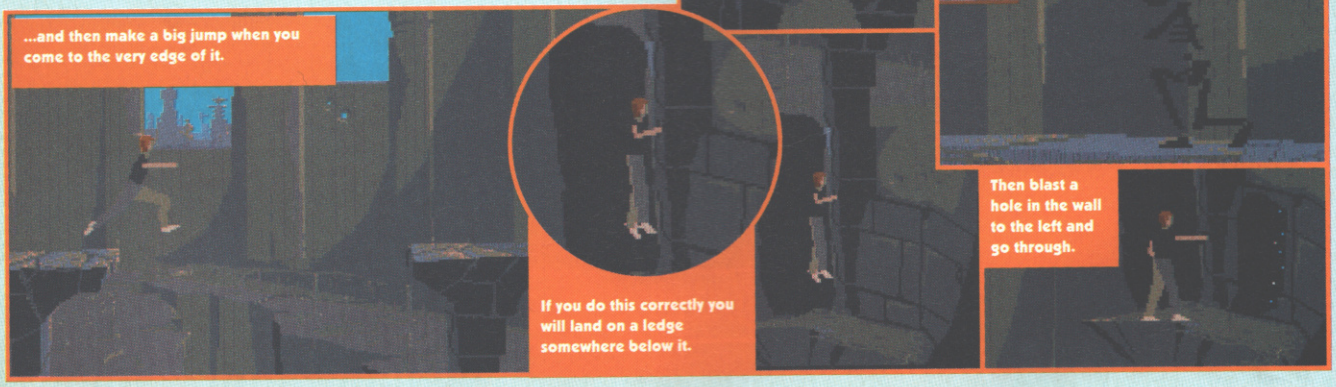

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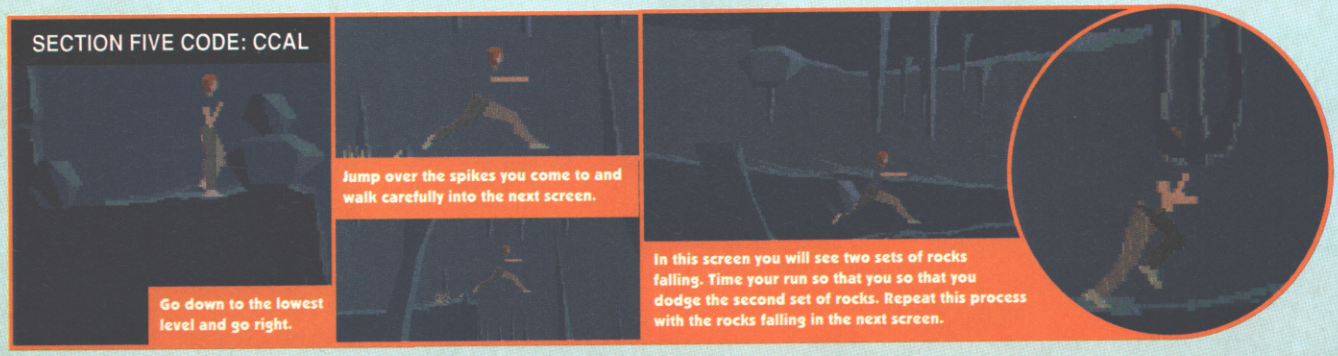
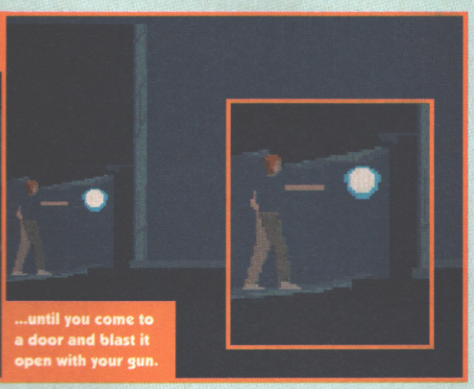


Run under the tentacles and jump over the chewer. Jump the next two chewers one at a time. On the next screens shoot the three tentacles, then jump the chewers.

In the next screen jump over the shaft and the chewer and go right...



...until you come to a door and blast it open with your gun.

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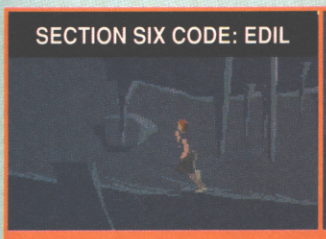
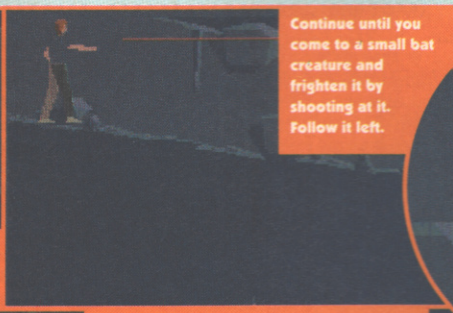
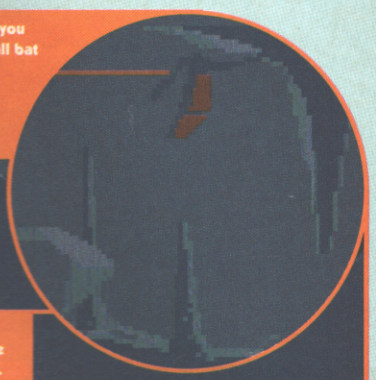
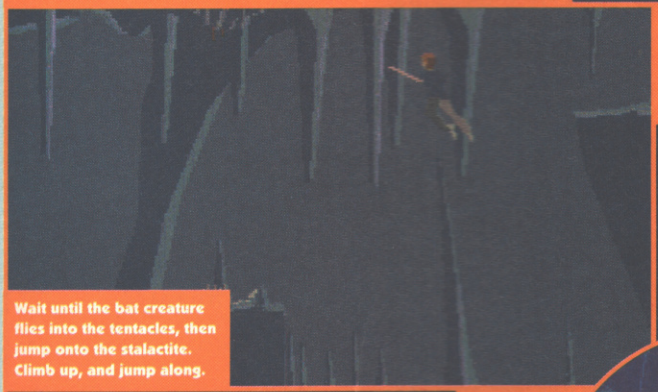


Now you have to go back left, dodging the tentacles and chewers, until you come to the falling rocks. This time take the upper path (don't worry about the rocks – this time they can't hit you).



Continue until you come to a small bat creature and frighten it by shooting at it. Follow it left.

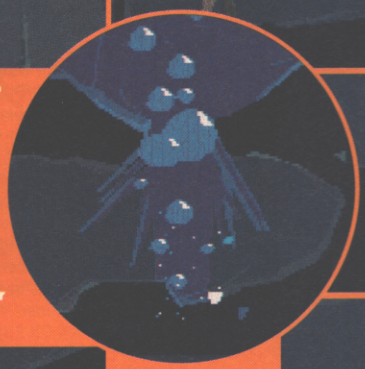




Wait until the bat creature flies into the tentacles, then jump onto the stalactite. Climb up, and jump along.

Jump left off the screen and onto the big T-shaped rock. Go left off the edge of the rock and blast the support with your gun. This causes the rock to fall in such a way that you can climb up into the upper level.

Go right to the pool of water. Stand at the left of the screen and blast the support from under the pool.



Immediately run left, jumping the holes and onto the small stone pad at the far left of the level. The pressure of the water will then force the pad upwards into the next level.

Go right and blast the door open. The waterfall will have been stopped, allowing you to continue.

And that's it for this trip to *Another World*. Next month we'll show you how to get through the last five sections.

MEGA LO MANIA

(Image Works)

One fellow who's grown too big for his boots is megalomaniac Daniel Beasley of Chard – he's conquered every island. Luckily he's managed to quash his ego long enough to send us all this...

SQUCIGQEKNS – Epoch 2
PHQCICHVTNG – Epoch 3
FIAACVOFZNA – Epoch 4
FUCAESCSXHS – Epoch 5
PVNCSZGYRHG – Epoch 6
IFIBUIRHPTM – Epoch 7
CGRCEEQXJNM – Epoch 8
OMXCQKJYONE – Epoch 9
WNKAFKFCNMR – Mother of all battles

THERE ARE SOME TIPS, TOO:

● The three islands in the last epoch take a minimum of about fifty men to complete, so save plenty.

● When nuclear weapons some into play, don't bother making anything else as it's simply a race against time to see who can make them first.

● You can only put one castle into suspended animation on each island so make sure it has a maximum of 999 men in it when you do.

● If one of the computer players attacks your castle with a force containing only unarmed men, then putting your men in that sector back into the castle (including men in turrets) will cause the enemy to leave the sector, as there's nothing they can do there.

● If you're not building any castles then try and team up with a computer player (or two if all four people are playing). This cuts down on the number of people that can attack you.

RBI TWO BASEBALL

(Domark)

When the computer is pitching, press P to go to the substitution screen where you can change the computer's pitcher for an inferior one. Or so reckons Cam Luoung of Macclesfield, anyway.

ROBOCOD

(Millennium)

Paul Ellingford and Scott Bowman of Wickford are feeling pretty pleased with themselves, having chanced upon a secret room.

Walk along till you get to the first ramp (jumping over the doors as you go) and jump up to a roof on your right. Walk left and you should go into the side of the building, leading you to the secret room.

WE WANT YOUR...

...tips! In fact, so eager are we to get our hands on them, we'll send software prizes to the best ones we get each month. And by 'best', we mean the freshest, crispiest, tastiest ones. We want you to take your favourite games to their limits... and beyond! (Oo-er.) And then tell us how you did it. Tips, maps and cheats are all in the running, but remember – our spies are everywhere, and we can spot a tip that's been pinched from another mag a mile off. So watch it. The address to send all your stuff to is Complete Control, AMIGA POWER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

RED HOT POKES FOR ACTION REPLAYERS

Action Replaypokes work as follows: having started the game, press your red button to activate the cart. Then type 'M' followed by the number given and a list of numbers will appear. Alter the first (and only the first) to the required number of lives, bullets, or whatever and press 'X' to return to the game. If the number is preceeded by a 'TFD', you want to use the TFD function instead to get an infinite number of whateveritis.

Alien Breed C05A4F time
C05A5B keys
C05A53 ammo
Alien Storm 8897 credits
Atomic 52F1 time
Baal FA20 lives
Batman The Movie TFD 7C876 inf lives
The Blues Brothers 45C9C energy
Bubble Bobble C09FDE player 1 lives
C09FDF player 2 lives
C09ED9 level
Builderland C62569 fireballs (first level)
Cabal 39DDA player 1 lives
Chuck Rock TFD 697E inf lives
6983 energy
Cobra BAB5 lives
Datastorm TFD 7258 inf smart bombs
Defender of the Crown 14A7F gold
Dragon Spirit TFD 199EE lives
Dynasty Wars D33 lives
Final Fight 1A17 credits
First Samurai TFD C848 inf lives
Foundations Waste 146EB lives
Frenetic 64B1 lives
Gauntlet II 8553 energy
8558 keys
Gemini Wing 135FF lives
Gods TFD 224 inf lives
Great Giana Sisters 8178 lives
817A time
Hunter 9B7 minutes
Impossimole C3DC energy level
Into the Eagles Nest 14617 keys
145D7 bullets & hit points
Ivan 'Iron Man' Stewart's Super Off Road Racer 1C45 credits
James Pond TFD 1B0 inf lives
231 timer
Kick Off 2 19D09 player 1 score
19D07 player 2/computer score
Lemmings 9DB7 percentage home
9E77 time
9DC2 climbers
9DCA floaters
9DBE bombers
9DC6 stoppers
9DC4 builders
9DC8 bashers
9DCC miners
9DC0 vert. diggers
Lotus Turbo Challenge II C0B05F time
Magic Pockets 1732 timer (treasure level)
Manic Miner (original) 2D063 lives
31BE9 level
Manic Miner (new) 25B23 lives
Miami Chase 64A3F lives
Midnight Resistance TFD 11692 inf lives
Monster Business 3809 lives
Monty Python 16059 lives (first 2 numbers)
Navy SEALs 9CCF lives
The New Zealand Story 641D3 lives
Nightbreed TFD 24A inf lives
Ninja Rabbits TFD 22AC2 inf lives
Ninja Remix 14A7 lives
OutRun Europa 10A5A time
10A4F turbos
10A51 rockets
Predator 5D7EB lives
Quasar 7DAAC lives
Red Heat 4A3B lives
Rick Dangerous TFD 44972 inf lives
Rick Dangerous II TFD 178AE lives
Roadwars 80F lives
Robocod TFD 2286 inf energy
Robocop II TFD 8034 lives
R-Type II TFD 1497E inf lives
Scooby & Scrappy Doo 4AD33 energy
Sidewinder 1592D lives
Speedball B219 player 1 score
B21A player 2/computer score
Speedball II 52A1 player 1 score
52A3 player 2/computer score
Super Space Invaders 1FC23 lives
1FC33 shield
1FC0F credits
Strider II TFD 6AD4 inf lives
Thunderblade 5BD82 lives
Titanic Blinky 7383 lives
Total Recall 1009 bullets
100D credits
Tusker BB59 lives
Vigilante A67F lives
Wacky Racers 881 credits
War Zone 15D65 player 1 lives
Zany Golf 25CA2 strokes (1 to 4 players)
Zarathrusta 6CF lives
Zone Warrior 591B lives
Zynaps 1EE9D lives

(Thanks very much to G Holmes, S Barker, Casey, Paul Bagnarol, Peter Davison, Jonathan Matthews, R A Williams and G P Roebuck. And keep 'em coming, eh?)

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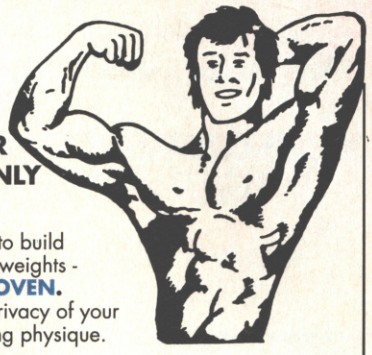

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THE NEW ocean

This year Britain's biggest software house are going to prove, quite conclusively, that they haven't forgotten how to produce great games after all. First you'll read about the new games, then, on page 60, Ocean's Software Director Gary Bracey outlines the future of...

THE NEW OCEAN

OR: WE HAVEN'T COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN HOW TO DO IT, YOU KNOW

It's no secret that Ocean – indisputably Britain's top software house – have just had, as far as the Amiga's concerned at any rate, one of the weakest years in living memory. *Navy SEALs, Terminator 2, Darkman* – it's not been the happiest of lists. However – and it's a fairly big however, make no mistake about that – this year is already shaping up to be very different. *RoboCop 3* showed the way, but what we have here is one of the most appealing new line-ups of any software house for the new year...

Though nobody's admitting it as such, one reason for the relative weakness of Ocean's recent Amiga product is that 16-bit stuff has been rather forgotten about, or put on a back burner at least. Consoles have been where it's at over the last twelve months, and though that's not changed, there's now proving to be room for consolidation. The Amiga, stuck somewhere in the middle between the PC and 16-bit consoles, is the ideal platform for both the super-involved and the easily accessible style of game, and you can see both here. Over the next four pages you're going to read about some very original and very different games from Ocean – only something going dramatically, horribly wrong could stop there being at least two cast-iron, instant classics here. Who, for instance, would ever have guessed that a straight coin-op conversion like *Space Gun* would appear the odd man out in any Ocean line up?

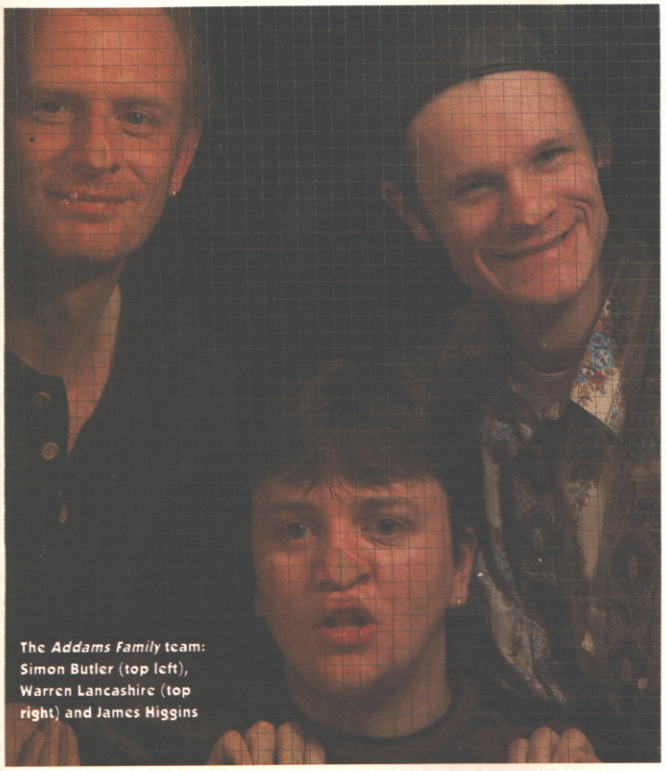
Here, then, are a few of the games that are going to define 1992...

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

Code: James Higgins
Design, backgrounds, additional graphics: Warren Lancashire
Sprites: Simon Butler

Gomez goes out on the roof – one of the extensive levels of *The Addams Family*.

Hang around Ocean for any length of time and you get the feeling that this game really is it – the bee's knees, perhaps the best single thing they've ever done. Everyone seems to believe it – complete strangers go, "Oh, you're here to look at the new games? Wait until you see *The Addams Family*!" – and, indeed, a bit of a play around with the very impressive Super Famicom version makes you feel that they might have some sort of a point. Unfortunately the Amiga version is rather less advanced, though the fact that the same team are doing it bodes well. This, as you may have guessed, is almost the diametric opposite of the *Hook*-style of game – a fast, furious and very inventive console platform romp in the style of *Sonic The Hedgehog, Mario III* or what-have-you. The men behind it are James Higgins



The *Addams Family* team: Simon Butler (top left), Warren Lancashire (top right) and James Higgins

(programmer), Warren Lancashire (design, backgrounds and other bits and pieces), and Simon Butler (sprites).

What happened to the Amiga version? I thought you might be a bit more advanced with it than you actually are.

James: Yes, we were. But then we went off it, did the Famicom version, and when we got back to the Amiga we thought, hold on a minute, we can do better than this, can't we? We were embarassed by it, basically. So we scrapped it all and started again, using the Super Famicom game as a model.

So what's the difference between the two Amiga versions?

Well, we've added parallax scrolling to the new one for a start. The main character – that's Gomez who is, I guess, the head of the Addams family – can now go behind some objects and in front of others too, which is a lot harder to do on the Amiga than the Famicom, let me tell you! The big thing, though, is that no matter how many sprites you have on screen it doesn't slow down at all. In this respect it's much, much better than a game like *Robocod*, say – the only time things go slightly jerky is when Gomez is jumping, and even then it's only the background, not the foreground stuff, that's affected. I think it's worth putting up with.

How does the game work then? What do you have to do?

James: You play Gomez and you have to rescue each of the family members who are being kept by a series of end-of-level baddies. There are five people you've got to rescue, so there are actually a few extra end-of-level-type baddies we've put in there who you don't have to fight to complete the game, though doing so might turn out to be a good idea anyway – defeating them will give you extra hearts for lives. You can defeat the first four important baddies – and so rescue the family members – in any order you like, but you have to free all four before you get to rescue Morticia in the final level.

The way this works is quite neat actually. One door you can go through from the central stairway area, which forms a sort of crossroads for the game, takes you into the Addams' music room, where Lurch, the family butler, is playing a tune on the piano. As the game begins the tune sounds awful, but it gradually gets better and better as you rescue the hostages until it becomes recognisably the TV show theme music! When you've finally rescued them all, a wall at the other end of the music room opens, and you get to pass through it to try your hand at the final level.

Later levels look even more 16-bit console-like – Gomez aside, this could be straight out of *Sonic The Hedgehog*

From what I remember of the film there isn't really much of a story to it, and certainly no baddies I can think of. Or at least, not baddies of quite the sort you're going on about here. Did that make it difficult to do the game?

James: Yeah! The whole game is very loosely based on just the last ten minutes of the film! What we've come up with is a platform game that uses the atmosphere and characters of Addams without sticking too ridgedly to the film – we've managed to get just about every important visual element from the film in there somewhere though. There are boxes dotted around the game, for instance, that you can hit to get a hint or tip – the Hand leaps up out of them and pulls down a cryptic clue.

The baddies, too, are based as closely as possible on characters from the film – even if they are fairly minor ones – while we've tried to include some of the film's sense of humour too. The various Addams family members seem disappointed at being rescued, for instance – they were actually enjoying their predicament! In the library screen, →

The staircase, which forms a central crossroads to the game. The doors lead to different levels

THE NEW ocean

SPACE GUN
Images Software

Space Gun is a bit of a throwback to the Ocean of a year or two ago, and doesn't sit too easily with some of the more exciting new products shown here. Still, this Taito coin-op conversion, as carried out by Images Software (the people behind conversions like *Shadow Dancer* and *Ninja Spirit*), does look better than most – a sort of *Operation Thunderbolt* set in space, featuring hordes of alien nasties queing up neatly to be blown away. It features two players, assorted collectables (from flame throwers to body armour) and mucho ultra-violence ahoy – the only really notable feature of the game is the option to use the until-now-fairly-obscure Trojan Light Phazer for your control.

This could be one of the last of a dying breed – straight coin-op conversions are conspicuous by their absence in Ocean's immediate release plans.

EPIC
Digital Image Design

If you've been waiting for this for ages then you're not the only ones. Ocean's *Epic* has been 'nearly ready' too many times to count now – indeed, 'reviews' of it have appeared in many places already (perhaps people have just got bored of waiting, and who can blame them?) without a completed Amiga version anywhere near happening. It's almost there now though, or so they tell us. We're not going to fall into the trap of promising a review for next issue again – it might be there, it might not – but here's a quick gander at this new outer-space blaster/flight sim/ *Wing* →

THE NEW ocean

Commander lookalike from DiD (the people behind *F-29 Retaliator* and *RoboCop 3*) to keep you going. From what we've seen of the ST version, it should be spectacular.

Epic should be in the shops within a couple of weeks, if it's not there right now.

WIZKID

Code and game design: Chris Yates
Graphics and game design: Jon Hare
Music: Richard Joseph
(All at Sensible Software, naturellement)

Wizkid is the sequel to Sensible and Ocean's 1987 8-bit hit *Wizball* (the 16-bit versions were done by Ocean alone later on). The basic game is a simple tile-knocking affair – you control a little floating head, the 'Wizkid' of the title, who has to zoom about the screen bashing moving tiles for points – but it's in the way things are presented, the humour and invention of the game, that things really come alive. Rest assured – this will be one big hit that really deserves its success.

How does the game work then, boys?

Chris: Well, why don't you play it and find out?

Er...

Chris: Look, it's easy. We have this character, BD Snail, who comes along at the beginning and explains what you actually have to do. He takes you on a guided tour of the → reading some of the titles on the spines of the books gives you clues too. We found comedy one liners don't really work in games, but some of the weird atmosphere does come across quite well.

This seems to be a real console style product.

James: Yes, it is – the Super Famicom was our lead machine, after all. That version's been out a month or two in America now, and we just learned that the American Nintendo Power magazine has voted it 'Best Famicom Game Ever,' so we must be doing something right! The Amiga version will include all the things that are good about console games – access codes, so you don't have to repeat levels you've already done, power bars for main baddies so you can see how much

More gorgeous *Addams* graphics – the green hearts are your lives, the white blobs indicate baddie power levels

energy they're using, lots of secret rooms, inertia on your characters, warp areas, plenty of continue points, the ability to quit each level at any time and go straight back to the central crossroads screen, different ways of doing each bit and so on.

It's a big game too – it'll take you at least two hours to play through it if you know exactly what you're doing, more like three if you go to all the secret rooms. We've made a point of avoiding a couple of things that annoy us about many console games though – there's no unseen danger in the game at all, and you can't die by simply falling off the bottom of screen like you do in *Mario*. Everything that can kill you you're given fair warning about.

In what ways will the Amiga version lose out compared to the Famicom?

James: I guess there's three basic ways really, the game design being the same and everything. First off there's the fact that the parallax can jerk slightly at some points. Then there's the fact that there are only 32 colours on the Amiga of course, and we've had to reduce the screen size somewhat too. The Amiga version is no longer full screen – the first version we did, which didn't have parallax scrolling, had a larger display area – but that's the trade off, basically. Otherwise the games are almost exactly the same. I just hope people aren't put off by the reduced screen area.

The Addams Family will be released in April to tie in with the video release of the recent film.

HOOK

Code: Bob Earl
Graphics: Kevin Oxland

Well, this one certainly isn't what we expected. Take a look at the screenshots. What do they remind you of but – yes, it is, isn't it? – Lucasfilm's instant-classic *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Or some sort of massive Lucasfilm/Sierra type adventure, at any rate. If any one game here was a real departure for Ocean, this is it. Let's go over to the creators to tell us more.

So, guys, have you seen the film yet? (After all, plenty of programmers working on film games have told us they only got to see the movie after their conversion was completed).

Bob: Yes, we did actually, just the other week. Do you want to know what happens in the movie?

Yes please.

Bob: Okay, Peter Pan, that's Michael Williams, is all grown up and lives in New York. He's forgotten who he is, of course – he has no memory of when he was a kid – and is quite a successful businessman or something. Anyway, one day he goes to London – goes to Great Ormond Street Hospital, in fact – to see his old Granny Wendy, but when he gets back to where he's staying his kids are gone, and there's a dagger stuck to the wall with a note attached. It says "The kids require your presence" and it's signed "Captain James Hook". He looks out of the window – it's night time – and there's this thing he thinks is a firefly coming towards him. It gets closer and closer – it's Tinkerbell, of course – and she whisks him back to Never Never Land. We show all this in a pre-game animated sequence. The story, and the game proper, starts with Peter arriving in this magical fantasy land.

So then what happens? It's obviously not an all-action kind of film or you would have made a platform game or similar out of it.

Bob: That's right. When we read the script you could tell immediately that it didn't really lend itself to a platform sort of affair. We had to follow the film plot, and that mainly takes the form of a sort of quest – what we kept coming back to was the idea of some sort of graphic adventure, but one with slightly more of an arcade slant than they usually have. The scrolling will be better than in most adventures, for instance. But if you're thinking it isn't the sort of game that Ocean have tackled before then you're completely right.

What stage are you at with it at the moment then?

Bob: We're still mapping it – we work most things out on lots of scraps of paper first – though some of the graphics are done. We've done two months work on it so far and know that we have to finish by April so that the game comes out at exactly the same time as the film. Unlike with some recent film licences, Ocean are

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN, NEVER NEVER LAND STYLE

***Hook* is full of rather glorious backgrounds like this one – they'll look even better when populated with sprites. This one here is a bar room scene, just the place to recruit characters, find out information and so on.**

The faces of Hook and Peter look out at you throughout the game, one or the other smiling depending on how well you're doing. The faces are those of the characters but deliberately *not* the actors – that would have cost Ocean a *lot* more.

The various controls you use throughout the game – examine, pick up, talk to, use and walk to.

Messages appear in this blank bit here.

The creative team on *Hook*, from left to right: Martin McDonald (background graphics), Kevin Oxland (graphics) and Bob Earl (code) – "It's a different sort of game" for Ocean

very keen to take full benefit of the publicity surrounding the opening of the movie, as well they might.

How do the controls work? They look fairly simple.

Bob: Yes, they are. There are five main controls – examine, talk to, pick up, use and walk to. When you get close to doing a particular task you can see the Hook face on the bottom left scowl and Peter's on the right brighten up, which is a nice touch. All the characters will have digitised speech too – with American accents, unfortunately!

Can you describe the way the puzzles will work?

Bob: Well, sort of, though we're still working some of them out! We've got to follow the script of the film fairly closely – that's one of our briefs – but having said that, we are allowed to expand on elements of it a bit for the sake of the gameplay. The first puzzle – when you get set down in Pirate Town in Never Never Land at the start of the game – involves finding yourself a pirate uniform. Tinkerbell hovers around your head much of the time, giving you hints occasionally if you get stuck. Much of it involves your going into shops and bars, asking questions, collecting stuff you need and so on – much like in any adventure, really.

There will be some humour in the game, but there won't be one liners everywhere – it won't be a *Monkey Island* in that respect. Actually, don't expect the game to be too similar to *Monkey Island* at all – people are always comparing them because they both have a pirate sort of background, and look quite similar, but really they don't have as much in common as you might expect.

Do you actually fly in the game at all, or doesn't that happen in the film?

Kevin: Well, you do right at the end – there's an arcadey fight section, and you get to do some flying around in that bit. The console version, which is a completely different game, has a lot more of that sort of stuff in it.

Anything else?

Kevin: Just the boring stuff really. It'll be one meg only, it'll come on four or five disks, but we'll keep disk swapping to a minimum – and anyway, it'll be hard drive installable – and, erm, that's about it really.

Bob: It's quite a different sort of game for Ocean – we know that – and it's certainly been different for me. This is the first time I've done a game completely to my own design. I think people are certainly going to be surprised by it – and hopefully it'll be a pleasant one.

***Hook* will be released in April/May.**

A couple of the backgrounds for *Hook* – the sprites haven't been put in yet (though they are drawn) and look – surprise, surprise – not unlike the ones in a certain Lucasfilm adventure. The characters can walk into and out of the screen, receding as they go, which makes for a neat effect in scenes like the one below, where Peter must walk onto the pirate ship.

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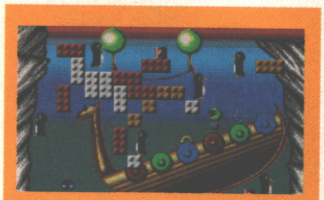


game, through the various controls, showing you how things work. Hopefully it'll all be very clear.

(And he's right – it is, too). It's quite a simple game then?

Chris: Well, yes, in effect, but we've added so many sub-sections and things to it that you can never be sure what's going to happen next. There are all sorts of different collectable things in the game – look, here's one, the Thunderchoppers. They allow you to grab the bricks in your mouth and carry them around the screen – they allow you to complete screens you otherwise wouldn't be able to do. What happens is that you do eight screens like this, flying around the screen hiitting tiles, then you go into a sequence which works slightly differently in that you've got little legs and arms and can't actually fly around the screen anymore – now you're Wizkid, rather than Wizball, and you have to work out different ways to do things. The game alternates like that.

Other stuff? Well, there's this musical tune you have to build up at the top of the screen with letters you collect. Oh yes, and there's this shoot-'em-up bit which is a lot like the earlier *Wizkid*, and this bit where you have to go down a well into an underground toilet... There are lots of different ways in which you can complete the game and, ooh, everything.

Indeed there is. There are also some quite saucy bits aren't there?

Chris: Well, not saucy exactly – risqué, yes. There are quite a few jokes and secret things in the game that you'll only find when you play it. I think you'll like it.

And he might just be right.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL... So those are the first games we'll be seeing from the new Ocean, though they're by no means everything the company will be doing this year. Look out for the long awaited *Liquid Kids* coin-op conversion from Ocean France, plus new products like *Push Over*, *Sleepwalker* (two original arcade-style things which sound like they may have a bit of *Lemmings* in them), *Iron Angel* (a new 3D flight sim) and *Mister Nuts*. There's more too – but we'll save it for another time...

GARY BRACEY: MISTER OCEAN

You may never have seen this face before, but this is one of the most important men in the games industry. Gary Bracey may not be one of the big money men – he doesn't own the company he works for, for instance – but, as Ocean's Software Director, he has his finger in more computer game pies than just about anyone. If you've ever played and enjoyed an Ocean game – and at a guess that covers every last one of you – you've got reason to thank Mr Bracey, and if you've ever felt ripped off by one, well, you could be excused for cursing him.

Gary is gregarious, brash, funny, bright, mock-innocent and easy to talk to – a typical professional software, which is part of what he is. He also seems supremely confident that the only place Ocean is going now is from strength to strength...

THE NEW ocean

On working at Ocean

Your title is Software Director. What do you actually do?

Erm , good question. Well, I'm in overall charge of development of all the software Ocean does, basically. That's not just the UK-based floppy disk stuff, it's consoles, CD, and overseeing lots of what our US office in California does. I'm also fairly active in the acquisition of licenced products for Ocean along with one of the directors here, Jon Woods. If you play a game based on a film or coin op, chances are I had something to do with Ocean getting that licence. I also have a fair amount to do with the actual design of some of our games – there are three project managers, Colin, Max and Lorraine, under me who run the day to day side of that, but I still like to keep my hand in.

"Piracy is something I feel passionate about. It's a thorn in the industry's side"

On the strength of the Amiga

How important is the Amiga market to Ocean right now?

Well, it's certainly the most important of the floppy disk based formats we work on, though the PC is coming up fast on the inside track too. There are two sorts of game we do – the simple but highly playable instant access sort of game that you see on the consoles, and the super sophisticated stuff you get on the PC and, increasingly, CD. The Amiga falls somewhere in between, and we do both sorts of game for it.

Are you looking beyond the Amiga already? Do floppy disk based games have a limited lifespan as far as Ocean is concerned?

It's true that the market is moving towards cartridge and multimedia, but that doesn't mean we're going to abandon the floppy disk market. The thing is, that's where Ocean have come from, that's our background and still our strength, and we're going to keep on supporting it – you can see our commitment to home computers in the fact that we still release games on the 8-bit machines when a lot of publishers have abandoned that market. *Space Gun, The Addams Family,* and *Hook* will be coming out on the Spectrum and C64, for instance.

That said, we're no longer being held back by our commitment to older formats. All our games are now designed with 16-bit, and, more specifically, the Amiga in mind. Though we still develop for the ST, we're not going to sacrifice the quality of an Amiga game so we can easily port it over to the ST or whatever. That's not the way it can work anymore.

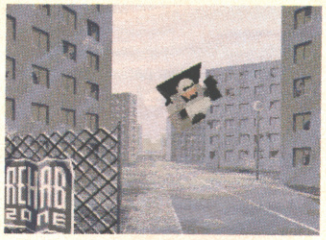
That said though, one of your big new games, *Epic*, was designed on the ST.

Well, the game design and algorithms were done on the ST, sure, but the Amiga graphics are completely different and all new. Rest assured, the Amiga version of *Epic* won't look like an ST game.

On piracy and game protection

How about the whole business of game protection? Has the dongle device you used with *RoboCop 3* been the success you hoped?

Piracy is something I feel passionate about. It's a thorn in the industry's side, but the trouble is that not too many people seem to want to do very much about it. We evaluated the whole dongle idea along with a number of other software houses, but nobody seemed very keen to put serious resources into it. In the end we got tired of nothing happening and decided to just put our money where our mouth was and dive in. The dongle was cracked, unhappily, shortly after the game came out, so it obviously wasn't a runaway success, though to be fair we think it took some pretty powerful equipment to do it.



***RoboCop 3* – despite the dongle it was cracked within two weeks...**

Though it was grating that you could download the entire *RoboCop 3* game from the bulletin boards within two weeks of the game going on sale, I think we can safely say that it won't be pirated casually by the man in the street. That's something anyway. No matter what some people might say, having games copies does eat away at our sales, I'm convinced of it. If nothing else, it's bad news for the man in the street in the long run because it means we can't charge less for a product.

So will you use the dongle again?

"You could download the entire *RoboCop 3* game from the bulletin boards within two weeks"

I'm not sure. We know how they got past the *RoboCop* one, and can make sure they can't do exactly the same thing again, but the way I feel about it at the moment is that someone else can try it next time. We've done our bit, done something positive about piracy without passing the cost down to the consumer, but if the whole industry is working to combat this problem, which it should be doing, it's time for someone else to take the reins up now. We feel we've shown we're serious about tackling the problem, now we need everyone else to show a similar commitment.

The thing is, of course, that piracy on this sort of scale may well just turn out to be a temporary problem anyway. As cartridges and CDs take over, the opportunities for casual piracy become smaller – it might not be a problem at all in five years time.

How about using manual protection and other ways of doing it instead.

We're still looking at all the options available. Yes, manual protection does suit some products, and you may see that from us in the future. Since the dongle we've had a number of people coming to us saying they've got the ultimate anti-piracy method, and we're obviously looking into some of these too.

On adding value to games

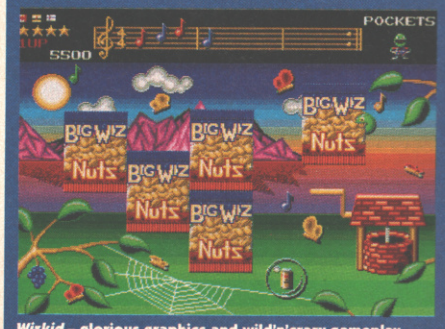
What about all the goodies you've been giving away in the boxes lately? Are you going to continue with that?

Would you believe that's got absolutely nothing to do with me. You'll have to aks Jo (Cooke, Ocean's Marketing Manager) about all that. (*We did, and, for the record, yes they probably will – for products that seem like they'd suit the treatment*).

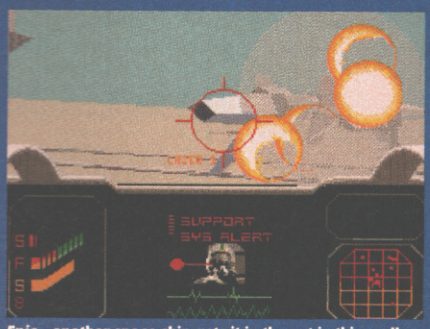
On playing games

What sort of games do you play?

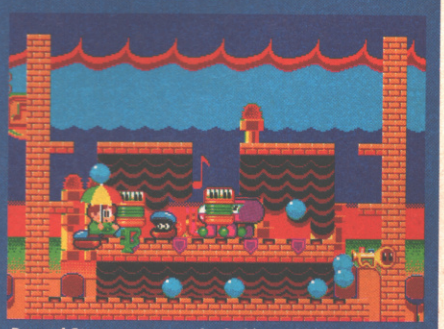
WILL YOU FIND A BETTER LINE UP ANYWHERE? WE HAVE OUR DOUBTS...



***Wizkid* – glorious graphics and wild'n'crazy gameplay. Check out those 'Thunderchoppers' (top right)!**



***Epic* – another space ship gets it in the gut in this, well, 'epic'-scale space shoot-'em-up thang**



***Parasol Stars* – pretty or what? This could just be the game to knock *Rainbow Islands* off that No1 perch...**

THE NEW ocean

What, other than our stuff you mean? Actually, I've been playing a lot of Sierra games – *King's Quest, Larry*, stuff like that – and I really want to take a look at *Birds Of Prey. Castlevania IV* is really good on the Super Famicom too, *Space Ball* is good, and I want to see *Populous 2* and *Jimmy White's*, which I haven't had a chance to look at yet.

On big name programming teams

You don't seem to use many of the big name independent programming teams, which is quite unusual for a company of your size. Why's this?

It's just not generally the way we do things, though there are, of course, exceptions. Sensible, with *Wizkid*, and DiD, with *Robo 3, Epic* and so on spring to mind, of course. I don't tend to like affiliate label-type deals though, because it really demands an affiliate label-style commitment to marketing, advertising and so on that would be prohibitive for most development teams, especially considering how extensively we believe in marketing our games.

"I don't tend to like affiliate label-type deals though. They require an affiliate label-style commitment to marketing... that would be prohibitive"

The other reason I don't like the idea much is that we could easily find ourselves spending a lot of time and money developing and supporting a team, helping them to have a successful original game and make their name, only to have them split off and go their own way. All that investment would be for nothing.

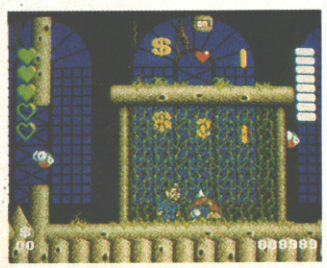
On movie licences and accusations of being formulaic

How do you feel when people describe many Ocean games, particularly movie licences, as formulaic?

Well, we do get criticised for this, but I think a lot of it has to do with the very high profile movie licences have. People are much more aware of them, and they've become something that it's easy to sneer at. Remember, though, that they're as much original products as anything else – we don't copy a coin-op with them, they have to be created from the ground up. And of course you have to admit that they sell – people vote for them with their money, so we must be doing something right.

Yes, we have been accused of being formulaic, but the thing is, we have proved the many different sub-games approach *can* work very well indeed. *Batman* was one of the best movie tie-ins done, and that consisted of a number of sub-games. *RoboCop 3* also, that had its driving sequences and its shoot-'em-up bits and whatever.

That said though, a lot of our new film games are rather different. The Amiga version of *The Addams Family* is a massive platform game based on the Super Famicom version, and really is terrific. *Hook*'s a true adventure game, and very different from what you might have been expecting too. I think these sorts of comment are simply going to become irrelevant over the next year.



***The Addams Family* – generally felt to be one of the best arcadey games Ocean've ever done. You'll find no formula here...**

On the future

What have you been happy with this year?

Yes, but I'll be even happier with next year.

What's going to happen next year then?

You'll see a huge diversity in the product range over the next twelve months – coin-op conversions, movie licences, totally original games, all sorts of things. You'll see more different types of game from us than you maybe have before.

People have said Ocean has been slow to come up with original products and genuine 16-bit products. Would you accept that in any way?

Well, I've heard that too and I guess there's some truth to it. Remember, though, that we have had our original 16-bit successes. *F-29* was a runaway hit, *RoboCop 3* was a movie licence with a difference, *Battle Command* did well too – we actually have a long history of doing original 16-bit games, right back to, I don't know, *Eco*. Now that was original – not very good perhaps, but very original.

During this next year though we're going to have a lot more top quality original stuff, from *The Addams Family*, which is really terrific, right up to a new CD product, *John Doe*, which is the sort of game that simply couldn't be done at all on floppy disk. That'll be completed in about two months, and it'll be really something. Then there's *Push Over, Sleep Walker, Wizkid* – lots of great original games.

How do you feel about the threat from the big Americans and Japanese companies – it's stronger than ever, isn't it?

Well, you could say that, but it doesn't really bother us – in fact, we relish it! A couple of years ago we were worried because we couldn't see the way the industry was going to develop or, indeed, continue to work, but I think we're all well over that now. If anything, things haven't been moving as fast as we expected, though this year I think they're going to pick up speed quite quickly.

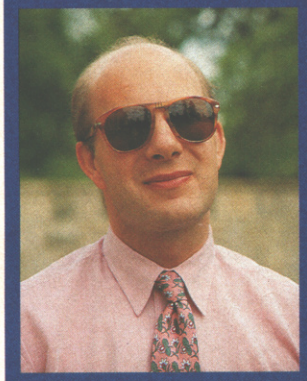
You're right though, one thing that's speeded it all up is that we're now getting the big boys involved – movie people, the Japanese and so on – and that's exciting, not scary. There's lots going on, but we genuinely feel we can hold our own against anyone – the fact that getting licences for Ocean is now easier than ever, because people see that we can consistently make a success of them, I guess – shows this.

I sound bullish about this, I know, but we know the market – and it's a mass market we're interested in, not any little specialist area – and we know how to be successful in it. We *do* explore original avenues with our products – it's not something we shy away from at all – but more importantly we regularly generate a high level of sales, and that's what counts at the end of the day. I mean, that's why we're here, isn't it? ●

OCEAN'S CREW

Of course, despite the last three pages, everything that happens at Ocean isn't down to Gary Bracey. Oh no.

For a start there are his bosses – David Ward and Jon Woods – who own the company. Then there are the product managers than work for him – Colin Gordon, Lorraine Broxton and Max Taylor. And they look like this...



David Ward – industry guru, Ocean owner and computer games veteran

Lorraine Broxton, one of Gary Bracey's three games producers, as is...

Max Taylor, ex of defunct Arcana Software and Assembly Line associate

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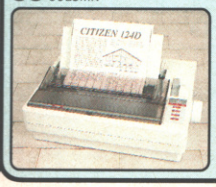

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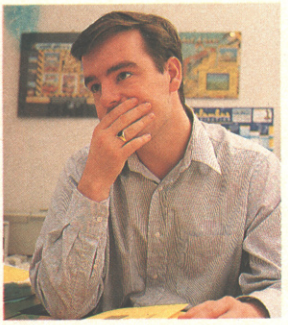
IF I'D KNOWN THEN...

FERGUS MCGOVERN OF PROBE

"If I knew then what I know now," says Fergus McGovern, 'the man' at Probe Software, one of Britain's top game developers, "I'd have concentrated even more on good solid game design every time." Fergus' boy-next-door looks belie his natural talent for business – with a string of hits and misses behind him this spritely 26-year-old is firmly ensconced at the top of the Ferrari-driving class of software success stories.

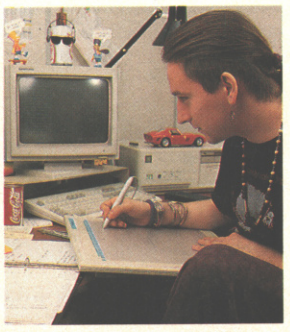


"Ah, *Viz*. Can we skip this one?" Fergus wonders exactly what to say...

Probe started life on the 7th of June 1984 – "one of my friends thought up the name in a disco one night" – publishing its own games. Early releases include *Escape From Alcatraz* on the C64, *Defence 16* on the Commodore 16, *Devil's Crown* on the Amstrad CPC, and *Mantronix* – "If I'd known then that a pop star was to going use the name I'd have made sure I registered it!" says Fergus. The big break, though, came with the release of Basildon Bond, starring all-round family favourite Russ Abbott. "The licence cost us nothing – it was done on a royalty basis," he remembers. "You may laugh, but we made it onto a Saturday morning kid's show with that one. We also ran an advert on the back of Russ' smash-hit single, '(Oh What An) Atmosphere'!"

In more recent years, however, Probe have walked the development-only path. "It's true that the publisher gets 80 percent of the profit and we only see around 20 percent, but you have to remember that it's they who take the risks. If the game bombs then they lose – we as developers still get our advance."

Although Fergus and his team – there are currently nearly 60 programmers and graphic artists developing for Probe across various systems – spend most of their time producing games to order, he can still find time to give credit where it's due to good original stuff. "I respect the guys at DMA Design for *Lemmings* – that's brilliant. Ocean's *RoboCop 3* looks pretty good too. I admire them for actually going down a different route with a film game. Graftgold's a good little team with some good ideas, and the Sensible boys are coming up with games that are new and innovative. Archer Maclean deserves credit for *Jimmy White's Snooker* too, mainly for the sheer guts and determination involved in putting it together and it actually being good at the end of the day."



Beavering away on a project for Probe – one of 60 game creators.

Probe's first Amiga release was a conversion of Sega's *OutRun*, so that seems a pretty good place to start...

VIZ

"Ah, *Viz*. Can we skip this one? Erm... Let's think about it. You have to understand that *Viz* is a very hard game to do. We had to capture all the fun elements and the humour of comic, which we did to a certain extent. The problem is, everyone has their own impression of *Viz*. It's a very subjective thing. The reviews were okay and it sold okay but I can't really comment any further than that."

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III

"Mirrorsoft wanted a four-part multiload game written in seven months across every format. You just can't write multi-level games to the quality needed in that time. I honestly think that in the time scale we had we did a really good job, but we'd have preferred to have gone for one style of game and made it fun and playable and real value for money."

SUPER MONACO GP

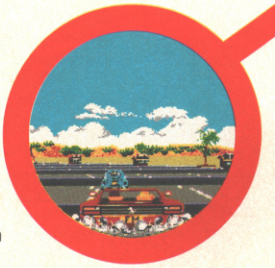
"The problems with *Super Monaco GP* were a simple case of things like the arcade graphics, which we'd been promised, never coming. Our brief was to make it a fun racing game, which we did very well. Obviously since then it's been superceded by stuff like *Lotus Turbo Challenge*, but I'm quite happy with the accuracy of the conversion."

OUTRUN EUROPA

"This should have been finished about two years ago, but we were constantly taken off it to do other stuff for US Gold. ZZKJ didn't want to do another racing game – so he trained up and gave ideas to a guy who'd never written a road racing game in his life. He did a wonderful job."

OUTRUN

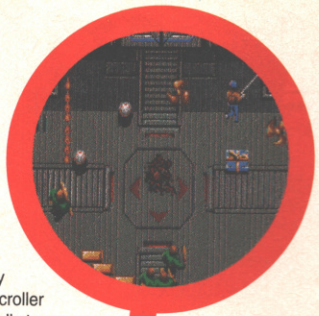
"If I was doing it now I'd charge a higher royalty! But seriously, it's not all money – the quality of the product is the most important thing. If I was doing it now I'd use ZZJK – he's an unbelievably top-quality coder. At the time I was pleased with what we managed, but with hindsight, I'm not so happy. We ended up porting from the Atari ST. Of course, the days when you can do that are long gone."



GOLDEN AXE

"I was quite pleased with *Golden Axe*. It won 16-bit Game Of The Year at one of the industry awards last year. I think we could have made it more playable with a few more pick-ups here and there rather than reproduce the 'drop the coin in' mentality of the original, and maybe we could have speeded it up a bit more. But that's always the way – if time wasn't such a priority, we could put in extra features and secret rooms and so on to improve the quality of a game. Fortunately, with the increase in console software production, we're now generally being allowed longer development times."

SMASH TV



"I wouldn't have started the conversions of this if I'd known what was going to happen. We were promised the arcade graphics but they didn't actually arrive until four days after we'd finished, so we'd ended up drawing them all from scratch. It's one of those games you accept because it looks easy enough to convert – a non-scroller with a few sprites – but actually turns out to be a really, really complicated game with lots of intricacies. We underestimated it, but to be fair to the programmers they did a remarkable job considering."

SUPREMACY

"With *Supremacy* I think we'd have saved ourselves a lot of time, energy and money if we'd sat down and planned the game from beginning to end before we started. The problem, of course, when you're given a big project like *Supremacy* and the usual sort of short time scale to complete it in, is that you've simply got to get a high quality – and therefore expensive – development team started on it right away. You've simply got grab the bull by the horns and go with it – you can't stop to think, but equally you can't churn out any old crap. I'm pleased with the game, and it certainly made everybody involved money. The advances we got from Virgin – which everyone reckoned were a lot larger than they really were – were made back by them with royalties on top. It sold very well, so people obviously liked it."

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES

"The original *Turtles* game on the Amiga was written in America. Mirrorsoft bought that version from America, which was on two disks and multiload all over the shop. When Konami saw our ST conversion of the American Amiga one they thought that *it* was the Amiga game and that the American Amiga version was the ST one – they were impressed, basically. We ended up converting our ST version of the crap American game back to the Amiga and the other one was dumped. All less than ideal, obviously."

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES: THE ARCADE GAME

"It's another conversion which again needed more time, and we needed the graphics and background maps and didn't get them. The problem there is that while we're re-doing all the stuff that we should have had from the coin-op people, we're not actually writing the game ourselves. Still, it's nearly finished and it looks and plays like the original."

SAVAGE

"*Savage* is an example of something a lot of publishers and developers have done. We took an 8-bit game and tried to make it 16-bit, but when the 8-bit version is a real technical achievement – as the original Spectrum version was – you have a hard time trying to do something as surprising on the 16-bit formats. You end up disappointing – the sense of that technical achievement is lost. We blew out. I just wouldn't even attempt a game like *Savage* now. Remember too, it was a very early Amiga game, written when the machine wasn't as well known as it is now."

ALIEN III & THE FUTURE

"*Alien III* is going to be unbelievable. No, really. We're doing three versions: one is an arcade version for certain consoles and home computer formats, another is an arcade Super NES version – which has to be different to the others, so it's a completely different game – and we're also doing an arcade adventure version. The Amiga version is derived from the MegaDrive version. I can't reveal anything about any of the versions yet, but there was a quite major something which I wished we'd done for a while, and now it has been done, so that just goes to show that hindsight and being given a little bit more time to make it all pukka really does work.

"We're doing more conversions and a number of original games too, but that's about all I can say – for contractual reasons, you understand.

"We've now dropped a lot of home computer formats – we no longer cater for the 8-bit and Atari ST markets. We're only doing high-end licensed product on Amiga, PC and consoles, which affords us some creative freedom. The games that we'll be doing will be a lot better than before. We're constantly learning from our mistakes."

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Work
IN PROGRESS

MEGA MANI

THE DIARY OF

The boys to entertain you. The current team at Sensible Software, from left to right: Chris Yates (*Wizkid*), Jools Jameson (MegaDrive *Mega lo Mania*, *Cannon Fodder*), David 'Ubik' Korn, 'Stoo' (a MegaDrive programmer), Jon Hare (*Cannon Fodder* graphics), Chris Chapman (CDTV *Mega lo Mania*, Amiga & ST *Sensible Soccer*).

Yes, you're right, it's been done before, this diary of a game thing – back in the heyday of Crash and Zzap!, in fact, with 8-bit games like Andrew Braybrook's *Paradroid* – but that doesn't stop it being a bloody interesting thing to do...

Interesting if you manage to get a programmer who can string a few words together in a vaguely cohesive way, that is. We've hunted high and low for one and eventually came up with Sensible's Ubik, aka David Korn. More on him in a minute.

Never trust a hippy! Well, unless he's Sensible's David 'Ubik' Korn, that is.

First though, the plan. For every month of the next year we're going to report to you on the current state of play with one of next Christmas' big name original products, Sensible Software's *Mega lo Mania II*. Sometimes there'll be lots to talk about, sometimes perhaps not a great deal, but hopefully through the series we'll be able to give you some idea of a) what it's actually like to be the programmer developing a big game and b) what sort of creative decisions go into the whole thing. Finally, in nine or ten issues time, we'll actually review the game – let's just hope it doesn't turn out to be a bit crap, eh?

Why *Mega lo Mania II*?

Well, for a start, it's a big, important game – the first *Mega lo Mania* was a sizeable commercial and (especially, as it turned out) critical hit, and the new game will be one of the big Christmas releases this year from a major software house, though in this case it's hard to actually say who (see True Stories this issue for a full update on the current Mirrorsoft situation).

Secondly, it's an original product of fairly broad-based appeal – we're not getting into any sort of off-putting specialist territory here, but neither are we settling for a brainless arcade blast. With luck this will be one of the key games of next year, one that'll really have an influence on other games, and one that'll introduce at least one or two new ideas.

Thirdly there's Sensible's way of working, which doesn't plan out too much in advance, but lets the game develop fairly naturally, new ideas coming in all the time. There'll be no rigid sticking to a pre-set gameplan here, and over the coming months you'll probably see a very different project developing to the early model you see here.

There is a fourthly too. Programmers working on products as involved as this one are understandably relectant to reveal too much, too early – what if all their good ideas are stolen and put into practice by somebody else first, say? That's the other factor that makes *Mega lo Mania II* such a good choice – everyone's seen the first game and knows the general idea, so Sensible need have no fears about revealing anything more than they're prepared to. On that note, then, let's go straight over to Sensible bossman Jon Hare...

Jon, first off, how long have you known you're going to be doing a *Mega lo Mania II*?

Jon: It was something we were thinking about while writing the first game, to be honest. Of course, we didn't actually *know* that we'd be doing one – if the first one had been a complete flop we probably wouldn't – but we and our then-publishers Mirrorsoft were confident enough in it

LO A II A GAME

working that we had the plans laid out before the first game hit the shelves.

At this stage, how do you think it'll be different to the first game?

Jon: Visually, the big change we're aiming at is to redesign the way the landscapes are, which we need to do because of the way we're changing the game design. The landscape needs to be much more animated for a start, and we'll be reducing the scale somewhat too, so we can fit bigger sectors in. We have to be careful we don't reduce it too much though, or a lot of the detail will be lost.

Beyond that, the changes we're going to be making are a lot more vague at the moment. In some ways we're going to start recreating the first game, but rewriting and compressing our routines to give more space for all the new stuff we expect to add later on – there'll almost certainly be an option allowing you to link two Amigas, for instance, for a two-player game. Some people like to plan everything out before they start on a project, but our way has always been to do-it-as-it-comes-along really.

Who's going to be working on it?

Jon: The programmer's a guy called David Korn – he used to be called Ubik, which was his pen name on the C64, when he did Firebird things like *Arcade Classics* and *Ubik's Music*. He also worked on our *International 3D Tennis* game for Palace. He's been doing a degree in Natural Science or something until just recently, but now he's started working full time for us again – he's an old friend of ours, basically.

In a few month's time a graphic artist will get involved, and we'll get someone in to do the music, but at the moment it's just him. He started work on or around the 27th November, at a guess. Of the three of us who are really the core of Sensible – myself, Chris Yates and Chris Chapman – it'll be Chris Yates who gets most involved with the day-to-day development of the game. He'll operate as project manager if you like – in so much as any of us ever operate as project managers around here...

And what about the Mirrorsoft situation?

Jon: Well, the game's slated for release at the end of the year, so there's plenty of time for pretty much anything to happen. Originally we were to have had a lot of products going through Mirrorsoft this year – not only *Mega lo Mania II*, but our football game and *Cannon Fodder* (see True Stories) too – but that's all changed now of course. The games are all back in our possession – as is the first *Mega lo Mania* incidently, that's no longer a Mirrorsoft game – and they're going to stay that way. Our feeling is that there's plenty of time to explore a few avenues and choose the best deal we can get, basically.

Okay. Let's move over to Dave Korn, then. What are your feelings about the game? What have you done so far?

David: At the moment I'm working on the visual display of the landscapes. It's looking a lot more 3D – like *Virus* or *Zarch* – than the first game ever did, with the landscape built up out of lots of little triangles. There's a sort of stipple shading effect on it at the moment too, but there's a lot of discussion at the moment as to how we should change that.

The big difference with the landscape is that far more of it will be completely out of your control – we'll be taking the passage of time more seriously, so mountain ranges will build up or decay, the geological properties of land will change as you play and so on.

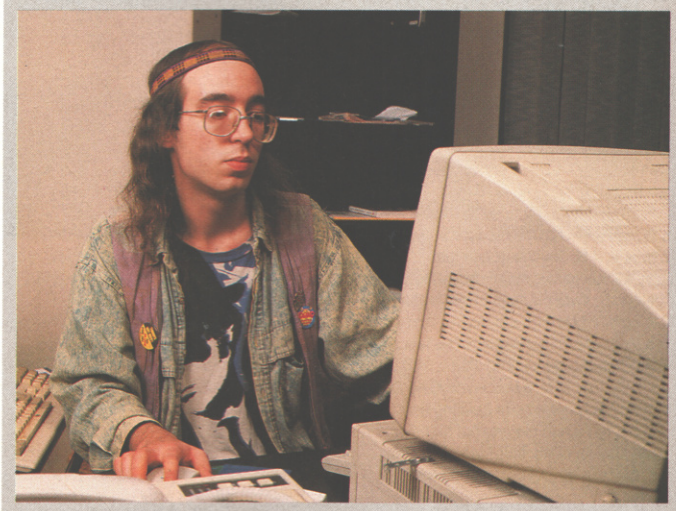
How much do you know about the first game?

David: Well, I'm not overly familiar with it – put it like that – but I have had it explained to me and know what all the ideas behind it are. It's a fairly straightforward game really, and of course, it's early days with this version yet. We've got no graphic artist yet for instance – Jon currently says it'll be 'Mr X' so I think he's hedging his bets! But less of this – you're going to spoil the whole point of the diary if you get me to answer all these questions now! ●

MEGA LO MANIA II – PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Meet David Korn – aka Ubik – ex-C64 programmer, ex-*3D International Tennis* programmer, ex-student, and currently programmer of Sensible's *Mega lo Mania II*.

Get used to this face – he's going to be taking us through the development of the new *Mega lo Mania* every month for, well, as long as it takes, basically...



Monday 25 November – Friday 29th November

I arrive at the Sensible Software office around noon on the first day and am soon hard at work – playing *Mega lo Mania*! After a couple of hours familiarising myself with the game to which I must produce a sequel, I'm bought lunch (and a pint) by the boys here, then it's back to the office to discuss the basic ideas for the new game. And that's it for the first day really – after that it's back home, with strict instructions not to return until Wednesday.

It's a hard job, programming games.

I follow instructions on Tuesday, staying in bed until the afternoon and don't go anywhere near work. Sensible appear to be paying me to do absolutely nothing at this point, but in fact there's a reason for it all – we're awaiting the arrival of my development system.

"A-ha! But what's a development system?" I hear you ask. Well, it's like this. Back in the bad old days (1985 or so) programming machine code was a far tougher job than it is now. You'd sit there, with your C64 or Spectrum or →

***Mega lo Mania II* – this is as far as they've got, basically. It's a solid 3D landscape with a blue sea effect that moves diagonally across the screen. As for finding out how they got this far, just flick the page...**

Work IN PROGRESS

whatever, typing instructions into an assembler program for hours, and then tell your machine to run the program to test it out. More often than not it would crash horribly, leaving you no choice but to turn off the computer, losing all the work you'd done since you'd last saved the program – and this was onto tape, remember, so saving wasn't the easy job it is now!

Nowadays, though, it's all much better. You type your program into an IBM PC, and when you want to test it, the code gets squirted through a cable into your Amiga. If the Amiga crashes – or catches fire, or anything else it might happen to do – your game is still safe and sound within the PC. So, no PC, no game writing, and I can't do anything much until mine arrives.

So far, so cushy then. Unfortunately Wedsesday arrives and with it my clunky Amstrad PC. I'm ready to begin work, but where do I begin? Well, one of the first aspects of any game that gets worked on is the visual display; it's a good place to start because you can see just by watching the screen if your code is working or not.

I'm quite taken with the idea of using a 3D-ish sort of landscape for *Mega lo Mania II*, a bit like the one in the *Zarch/Virus* game, mainly because it'll look really nice if we manage to get features like continental drift, mountain ranges growing, islands sinking into the sea and so on into the game. The idea is that this evolution of the landscape will force the player into more empire building and relocating than in the original game. In the earlier levels of the first *Mega lo Mania* you can win by just settling in a good sector and sending your army around to attack all the other sectors in turn. No longer! In this one there's the danger that your home base is going to sink into the sea, so you'll simply *have* to move! So, in the end, the first thing I do is sit down and write a routine to draw triangles. Triffic!

It's easy, this game writing lark, I tell you. A little bit of tapping and typing and my program is happily drawing triangles all over the screen. All seems to be going smoothly, so I add a bit of perspective maths, a table representing the height of the ground at each point on my soon-to-be landscape, and a simple routine to join all the points together using triangles. Try a test run and – zap! – I've created a little world, all of my own.

Of course, it's not as large as the real one (only 16x22), and it's a bit ragged at the edges, and there're a few holes where the triangles don't quite join up, but it's mine, I made it myself, and it only took me two days (God took three times as long with his one). I end the week tidying up the program, smoothing out the rough edges and so on. I also take apart the code from the previous game I did for Sensible, *International 3D Tennis*. There're bound to be a few useful bits'n'pieces in it – interupt routines, random number generator, keyboard and joystick reading routines. It's all a bit cannibalistic, taking pieces from the dead body of your last game to form the skeleton of your new one, but just think of it as recycling and it all seems okay.

"my program doesn't need to do nearly so much maths as a real 3D game"

Monday 2nd December – Friday 6 December

There are still a few holes in my world, where the triangles don't join up, and it's getting a little bit embarrassing, so I do what any programmer would do in the circumstances – I write a test routine. It shows three points on the screen joined by lines. I can move all three of them round the screen, and at the touch of a button my triangle routine is called to join them up with a filled triangle. The triangle should exactly cover up the outlines, and as it's a diferent colour I can see straight away when some pixels are left out. However, this sheds no light on the mystery, so I do the other thing any programmer would do in the circumstances – I forget about it for a while and go onto something else.

Up until now all my triangles have been solid filled blocks of colour. A few simple modifications here and there and the routine can now fill them up with any pattern of my choice. I draw a few patterns in *D Paint*, save them as files, mix them into my code and hey presto! A lovely speckled patterned landscape!

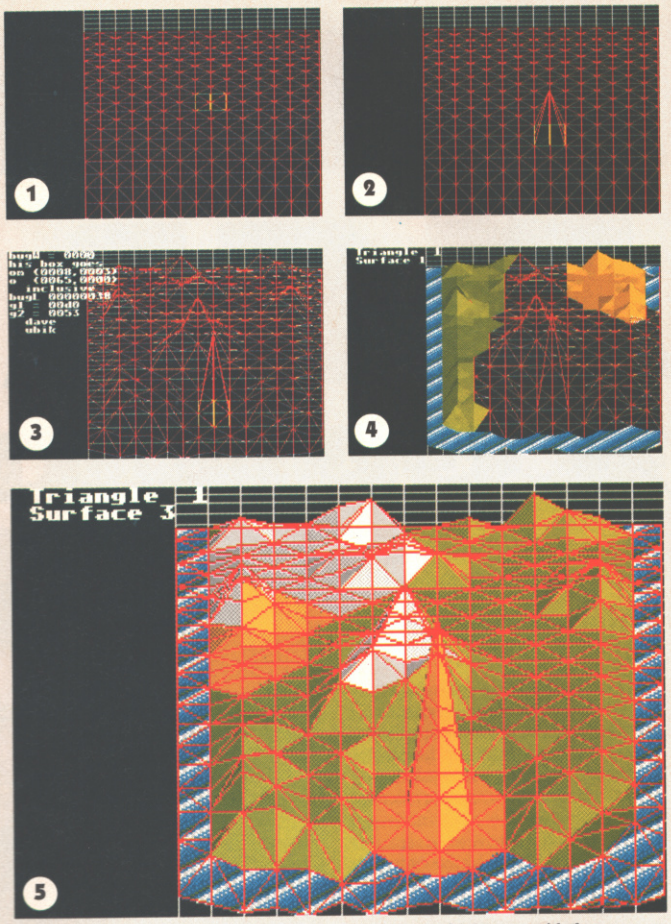
It looks great until Jon Hare takes a look and tells me he doesn't like it. Peasant! Still, he's the boss, so I get him to draw some patterns he *does* like for me. He provides me with a set of plain but functional stipple patterns. Using them makes it look much more like a real 3D game, but without nearly so much effort. Because of the simplified nature of the landscape, all the triangles having their corners at regular intervals, and simplified perspective, my program doesn't need to do nearly so much maths as a real 3D game. I christen the technique '3D Fudgey-o-vision'.

Monday 9th December – Friday 13th December

It's time to write a landscape editor. I have in mind a bit of code to display the landscape in wire-frame 3D, allowing you to click on points with the mouse and drag them up and down. In between doing this I also spend some time assigning colours and shades to all the triangles – it's a bit like painting-by-numbers.

A couple of days hard work sees the landscape editor done, and very nice it looks too – all wireframe 3D with red lines. I waste the rest of the day playing with it – pulling mountains out of the ground, lowering islands into the sea, then colouring it in at the touch of a button. It's terrific fun, and slightly reminiscent of *Populous*. Perhaps when they were first writing it, the guys at Bullfrog found they were having so much fun with their editor they turned it into the whole game!

Thursday and Friday are spent fixing the bugs in the triangle routine by the most horrible method known to mankind – hand simulation. This consists of writing all your variables down on paper, and then going through the program instruction by instruction, doing exactly what the computer would do. It takes hours, but at last I find out why the triangle routine is leaving little holes in the landscape. Having found the bug, it only takes ten minutes to fix and then – perfection! I go home feeling very pleased with myself.



Building a world, *Mega lo Mania II* style. Here's how far David Korn got with the game before Christmas – a 3D landscape editor that builds up from this simple grid (1) into a basic landscape, complete with simulated light source and Jon Hare's 'plain but functional stipple patterns' (5). The stages in between are fairly self-explanatory, but the code behind it isn't – and that's why we're not going to get into that side of things at all!

Monday 16th – Friday 20th December

Oh dear. The painting-by-numbers approach to the landscape isn't working as well as I'd like it to. Jon suggests that I should do proper shading to simulate a light sourse (the sun) shining from any direction. This involves doing some proper 3D maths, which is what I'd been trying to avoid all along, but why not? At the end of the first day working on it there's a bug which is causing my light-source routine to go around adding up numbers which are, quite honestly, completely ridiculous. I print out a listing of the routine to read on the way home, and while it's printing, the paper jams and messes up a couple of lines. As soon as I look at the listing on my way home I find the bug – it was exactly where the printer messed up. Maybe I should leave the printer to do the program – it seems to be smarter than me!

I fix the problem, then write a little routine to change the angle of the light source to give the appearance of the sun rising and setting. It works, and the whole thing looks very nice indeed. That's it for now though. I'm going to break for Christmas – see you next month. ●

● See you next month, when David goes through what – if anything! – he managed to get done in the hangover month of January.

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ISSUE 33 – ON SALE MARCH 14

GAME REVIEWS CONTINUED

It's another mixed bag, with strategy, racing, and even an acid rave game...

BIG RUN

Publisher: Storm
Price: £25.99
Authors: David C Bowler (programming), Shaun McClure, Rob Whittaker, Ned Langman (graphics), Doomsday Machine (sound)
Release: Out now

***Big Run* – we've simply seen this sort of thing too many times before.**

Big Run is a faultlessly observed sim. Not, unfortunately, of the Paris to Dakar rally which, according to the blurbs on the packaging, it's based on. For one thing it starts a few thousands miles too late in Tunis and I doubt there are many huge raised ramps resting on top on neat, symmetrical rock towers in the middle of North Africa.

No, what *Big Run* is a sim of is a motor racing coin-op conversion, and it flawlessly imitates every cliché of the genre. We're not after reality here; who wants to put up with kamikaze camels, blistering heat that bursts your tyres and a windscreen that's constantly gunging up with dust? Nah, what these burn-'em-ups are all about is jamming the joystick forward and weaving at top speed through cars, rocks, barriers and other obstacles.

Big Run really has nothing new to offer. The graphics are serviceable, but over-familiar, with stripey roads endlessly rolling towards you and barriers and rocks appearing from and disappearing to nowhere in the flash of an indicator. The sense of déjà vu that sets in by the third or fourth level doesn't purely come from having seen it all before in other driving games, however; apart from the addition of a few mud huts and the occasional river, all the six levels are so similar you can't help thinking, "Hey, haven't I done this road before?"

The control method is of the thumb-numbing ram-the-joystick-forward-for-the-entire-game variety. You change from high to low gear with the fire button – make sure that you've got a comfortable joystick.

Not that you'll be playing it for long. If you're an experienced computer driver it's not going to take you more than half a day to get through all the levels. OK, you can try and improve on your score with faster times, but I doubt you'll be bothered. This isn't actually a bad game, but most people will get bored with ther ed and brown landscapes, the same red opponents and the same sound effects pretty quickly.

● *DAVE GOLDER*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Extremely basic gameplay and over-familiar graphics make this pretty dull going.
61 PERCENT

TOP BANANA

Publisher: Hex
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

The cunningly named *Top Banana*. Well, it's better than 'mediocre tangerine'.

I wasn't in the best of moods this afternoon, and the last thing I wanted to have thrust at me was a game featuring psychedelic 'acid' graphics, a 'dance' soundtrack, a naive ecological plot, environmentally-friendly packaging and things that reverse the controls and wobble the screen about when you walk into them. To rub salt into the wound, *Top Banana* (for pity's sake...) suggests I use "the power that is Love" to take on the various adversaries it throws at me – ie shoot them with heart-shaped bullets.

The game is probably best described as a cross between *Rainbow Islands*, *Flood* and the contents of one's stomach after a heavy Italian meal. It takes *Rainbow Islands*' vertically-scrolling platforms layout and *Flood*'s slowly rising

Those *Super Sprint* variants just keep on coming. This one's not the pits, but...

INDY HEAT

Publisher: Storm
Price: £25.99
Authors: The Sales Curve
Release: Out now

The vertigo-inducing view of the Colorado track in *Indy Heat*. The grey car bursts into the lead, while the red, yellow and blue cars languish in the pits, waiting to get the all-important fuel topped up. Sadly this is about as exciting as the track designs get.

Storm's *Indy Heat* is a conversion of the *Super Sprint*-type coin-op from the same people (arcade-wise) who brought you *Ivan 'Ironman' Stewart's Super Off-Road Racer*. It's, er, alright.

Okay, I suppose you want to know a bit more than that. Which means I'm going to have to start making things up. Right, here we go. *Indy Heat* is the little-publicised fourth game in the Indiana Jones series, and in it you control a little Harrison Ford sprite who, uh, runs around with his whip trying to retrieve the Great Lost Corduroys Of The Incas, but finds his progress hampered by giant aubergines with anti-tank rocket launchers. (*Cease this utter drivel at once or you're fired -Ed*).

Screaming round'n'round the Indy track.

Okay, so I'm a crap liar, but it just goes to illustrate the fact that there's almost nothing to say about this game that you can't work out for yourself by looking at the screenshots. What they don't show is that it's a speedy and playable racer, catering for up to three players at once with a choice of two control methods, both of which work pretty well. It's almost identical to the earlier game except there're no bumps and hills to worry about and no bonus icons lying around to provide you with tricky decisions about whether to go for them or concentrate on getting round the course.

It has a less convoluted track sequence too, the 10 courses coming one after the other and not really offering any increased difficulty as they progress (in fact, the last one is the easiest of the lot). This (coupled with the minimal difficulty setting) means that you'll see every track by about halfway through your third game, and with no points system to keep you playing your interest will probably cease at that stage. With more players adding a competitive element (especially when you sabotage the others' refuelling pitstops by crashing into their cars) it'll last a bit longer, but this lacks even the fairly limited depth of *Super Off-Road*, and what does remain of it (the chance to customise your car) is negated anyway by the option which allows the computer to automatically make the selections for you. This is a competent enough conversion, but it's a bit limited as a full-price game.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Not exactly terrible, but a complete waste of money if you're going to be playing it on your own.
Even if you're not, *Super Off-Road* is lots better and available on compilation.
63 PERCENT

water-level (actually, *Rainbow Islands*' slowly rising water level, come to that), and implements them in a bilious mixture of confusing graphics and silly sound effects, the object of which is to collect things, shoot things and climb to the top of each level. If it wasn't all so inconsequential I could have got quite cross with it. Not only is it impossible to see what's going on most of the time (which is probably just as well), but even if you could there wouldn't be much to do. Just collecting, shooting and climbing. You can't make rainbows or anything.

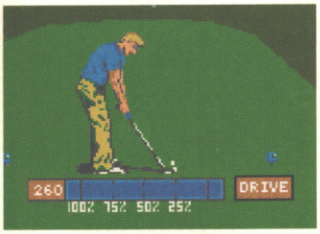
Even setting aside the above list of irritations (even the 'reversing the controls' one – I mean, why not go the full hog and have something that disables the controls altogether, or makes the screen go completely blank, or punches you in the face, pees in your beer and steals your girlfriend?), *Top Banana* simply fails to make the grade. *Rainbow Islands* does it all a hundred times better, and without all this 'acid culture' how-do-you-do.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Scrappy and annoying. The Amiga's equivalent of 'The Word'.
45 PERCENT

PGA TOUR GOLF COURSE DISK

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £14.99
Authors: Bluesky Software
Release: Out now



Fans of the best golfing gate to date can now play a round just a little longer.

Reviewed by one of our more naturally talented, entertaining, witty, intellectual and good looking reviewers back in issue one (er, well actually it was me), the original *PGA Tour Golf* was concluded to be "probably the best golfing game to date". Its user-friendly menus and control system were a veritable delight, its graphics were a treat and all in all it was rather scrumptiously playable to boot. "Hip, hip, hooray," we said as we reviewed it. "Hip, hip, hurrah," you replied as you skipped briefly over the review then went out and bought it. "Hip, hip, hurrah," thought Electronic Arts as they raked it in as *PGA* stormed into the charts, "Why don't we release some more courses?"

Whether there will be quite so much hipping, hurrahing and groups of enthusiasts doing the Hokey Kokey over what we have here remains to be seen. Technically speaking, all you're really getting are three new real life tournament courses – Southwind, Eagle Trace and Scottsdale – for yer money. Although the 42 holes are slightly more tricky than before, there is little new here to hold the attention of anyone who's irretrievably bored of *PGA Tour* already. There are no new features to see, no new control methods to try out and basically nothing more than you'd really come to expect to find on a data disk. In some ways data disks are a bit of a con when you think about it, but then again, you don't have to buy them, do you?

Still, if you are bored of the courses given in the original *PGA* (but not of the game) and fancy a bit more, feel free to buy this product. If, on the other hand, you are bored of the game as a whole then may I suggest a totally different one – *MicroProse Golf*, say – to quench your golfing thirst instead. I may? Oh good.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Three new courses for probably the best golfing game ever. You'll know immediately if you want it, in which case you'll have great fun.
75 PERCENT

CRIME CITY

Publisher: IF...
Price: £25.99
Authors: Steve Redpath (Design & Graphics), Andrew Prime (Programming)
Release: Out now

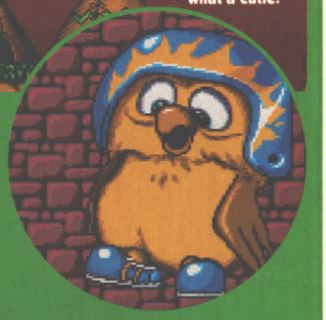
This is Steve White's girlfriend. Lovely, eh? Now you can see why I tried splitting up with her, before she inflicted any further damage on my retinas.

Steve White is a crime writer who's frustrated by the fact that he's not living what he writes about. "It was fate's cruellest trick, to give me a job of sitting endlessly at home, doing nothing real, and yet forcing me to immerse myself in a world of vividly real actions and people and decisions," he bemoans in the manual's introductory story. Just think what tedious books he must write if his idea of 'vividly real actions' are anything like the humdrum real-life mystery he →

A cute scroller with added déja vù.

VIDEOKID

(Main pic) Videokid gets rootin' and tootin' in the Wild West level. (Below) The first End Of Level Guardian – what a cutie.



Publisher: Gremlin
Price: £25.99
Authors: Twilight
Release: Out now

You'd never guess that this was from the same authors as US Gold's *Mega Twins*. Showing a quite astonishing talent for diversification, Twilight have produced a game so far removed from that cutesy arcade slash-'em-up romp as to be practically unidentifiable as their handiwork. Admittedly, there is a tiny, tiny similarity in the basic style – in as much as you do progress through a cutesy landscape with no control over the screen's movement and zap lots of nasties out of the way – but really, besides that superficial resemblance we're looking at a whole new game.

I mean, the plot! Have you ever heard such imagination? Our hero, a fashionable young chap called Billy, is watching a video one day when POW! – he suddenly finds himself sucked inside the TV, his bodily parts pixelised so that he becomes a character in the movie! (Well, okay, maybe that bit is just a smidgen Tron-like but hey – there are only seven truly original ideas, apparently). It's great! And then there's the graphics! Well, alright, to the uneducated eye it does look very slightly like someone took the characters from *Mega Twins* and half of the backdrops and sort of rearranged them a bit, but if you look closely you'll see that, in some cases, up to 80 percent of the pixels in any one sprite can be totally different!

And as for gameplay, well... There's none of that boring old scrolling-along-in-various-directions-mincing-the-baddies-with-your-sword rubbish here, oh no! In *Videokid*, you scroll along in various directions mincing the baddies with up to five – count 'em! – different kinds of gun, not to mention the two – count 'em! – other power-up weapons you can also collect to help yourself out! So it's nothing like *Mega Twins* at all – (*They don't believe you. Spill the beans -Ed*)

Oh alright, so I'm lying. *Videokid* is just a slightly more shoot-'em-uppy version of US Gold's coin-op conversion, but hey – I'm sure Twilight put a lot of work into that code, and why shouldn't they be allowed to make a few bob more out of it? There's a recession on you know, mortgages don't just pay themselves, and in any case this is a groovy zapper in its own right, with great sound, varied graphics, lots of action and some really nice touches (the jingle at the start of the Wild West level is a snatch of The Good, The Bad And The Ugly and, er, some other ones). Just don't buy it if you've already got *Mega Twins*, that's all.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

***Videokid* – a real 'mega' sort of game.**

THE BOTTOM LINE
A decent blaster, and one that the younger shoot-'em-up fans out there will probably go gaga (or possibly 'goo goo') for, but the similarity to *Mega Twins* is a bit cheeky.
70 PERCENT

gets embroiled in in *Crime City*.

The plot has it that Steve's old man has been stitched up like a kipper and is now doing porridge for the murder of his best mate, David Walker. This obviously isn't very fair, so Steve takes it into his hands to find out what really happened and present the evidence to the police.

Steve's dad's office is where the adventure begins, and it's a scene returned to time and time again, mainly because of the computer system used for the storage and retrieval of records, surveillance and telecommunications. (It also features a version of *Pong*, which turns out to be the most entertaining way of passing the time in *Crime City*).

Anyway, Steve's father's messages and diary offer some leads, with the latter revealing appointments and telephone numbers, so it's onto the telephone to see what anybody has to say for themselves. I thought dialling 999 might throw up some chucklesome dialogue. I wasn't wrong. I asked the police for the time, and their response was both believable AND funny... "Is this a joke? It is an offence to waste police time you know." Hahaha. Sorry, but that kills me every time.

Still, mustn't tarry, my old man's life's at stake here. A map of the city shows the locations uncovered during the investigation, the idea being to search them and talk to the residents for clues. Calling up the map – there's a little resistance from the fussy mouse-driven 'point and click' interface – you can pick a destination and then chose a means of transport. I could walk, which is free but takes ages, or take a cab, which always seems to cost twice as much and take a third as long as the bus. Visiting the hospital, I tried to make a date with the deformed nurse there, who turned out to be Ben Elton's witty sister: "I would love to go on a date with you, but I have to work 24 hours a day for the next two months because this is an NHS hospital." Titter.

It gets worse though. I next took Steve to see his girlfriend, who looks like Mr Potatohead (I'd hate to think it was based on the artist's missus). She's got a great personality though. When I chose to tell here that we ought to split up all she could offer was: "Split up! Split up! How dare you suggest we split up. Get out of here and only come back when you have got some sense in that tiny brain of yours." Oh dear. At least she's believably fickle – I phoned her up after the ruck and asked to see her and she says: "You know you can come around at any time you like." Chicks, eh?

There's a limited number of questions and answers on offer here, and the unbelievable and unbelievably unfunny dialogue doesn't help. Though the basic private eye mystery idea has potential for an adventure game, this version of it comes across as though it was written by a child, and fails to generate any emotion or even begin to suspend reality. To be honest, I couldn't care less who killed David Whatever.

● *GARY PENN*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Computerised interactive fiction lives or dies on its interface and its storyline, and *Crime City*'s lousy in both respects. Need I say more?

30 PERCENT

HARPOON (WITH BATTLESET 2)

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £34.99
Release: Out now

Not as visually interesting (?) as *Silent Service 2*, but *Harpoon* does offer a helluva lot of complex bits and bobs.

The one thing a wargame needs in order to succeed, in my eyes, is not to look like a wargame. And *Harpoon* can't be faulted on that count. In fact, if it didn't have the 'w' word written all over the packaging I'd have been fully prepared not to mention it at all. It's more of a naval strategy game, where you're put in charge of a fleet of ships – plotting their courses, controlling their surveillance systems and attacking any baddies that approach. (The baddies are the Soviets or NATO, depending which side you're on, and there are loads of different scenarios to choose from.) It's just like its bathtime soap-dish-and-sponge based equivalent, really, only a whole lot more realistic and with the added potential of air strikes and weather forecasts.

A good points/bad points review is inevitable, so for a change let's start with the bad points, foremost among which is the way the game's been put together. I'd be very surprised if it had been written in assembly language, judging by the speed everything runs at. Pascal would be more like it, or maybe Lisp. Speed shouldn't really be a problem in a wargame – it's nice to have a bit of thinking room – but literally everything in *Harpoon* behaves as if it's wearing concrete wellies, from display updating to pull-down menus. There's a delay of anything up to five seconds between clicking on something and anything happening to suggest that the game's actually interested in what you're trying to do, which gives the impression that the computer's tied up with some higher purpose, and would rather you didn't keep bothering it with your trivial aspirations.

Presentation generally is pretty poor, actually: good for a wargame, but a lot cruder than it might have been.

And the good points? Well, it's incredibly detailed, as you can probably

Classy strategy, done the action way.

STEEL EMPIRE

Publisher: Millennium
Price: £29.99
Authors: Grey Matter
Release: March

Review this perplexingly complicated strategy game by tomorrow," the enclosed letter callously threatened. It's 9:37 pm. "Great," I thought, "I'm surprised they didn't deliberately send me only half the instructions."

The planet Orion is where we're off to, a planet which you, and up to four other computer or human players, are out to individually conquer. This scrollable planet is divided up into individual countries with each player starting in a separate one, possibly casting up distant memories of some kind of war game. For your first few turns, the general game strategy will consists of building a factory, coming up with a cyborg or two, and then moving these cyborgs to take over and set up government in adjacent countries.

Take the next few turns to increase your empire – as everything costs money ensure to take over some cities to reap in extra cash, and also a few rural countries where you can start up new factories to build up your cyborg force ready to attack. Up to this point there will be little chance that you'll have been attacked by the opposition so perhaps now would be a good time for you to make an attack.

Unless 'Fog of War' mode is previously turned off, *Steel Empire* doesn't let you see any off the enemy icons – that's to say their factories, cyborgs, or defences – on your turn, so unless you have an extremely good memory you can't just jump on in there and attack. A spy will have to be sent in first. If there are no enemy cyborgs about then you can take over a country simply by moving one of yours in, else you'll have to fight it out head to head against your opponent.

To be brief, the battle sequences take the form of a fight to the death match via a split screen scrolling overhead view arrangement with your cyborgs at one end, the enemy's at the other and appropriate scenery in between. The basic strategy involves moving forward and shooting the enemy by various means – you move one cyborg at a time whilst the others move and shoot by themselves. Although this may seem like a good idea, it's quite possible to win or lose without personally actually doing anything – I have played games where you've felt more involved in the action.

Well, even though size isn't strictly important, that's still about the size of it. The graphics are really what you'd come to expect of this sort of thing – pretty boring but adequate – and the sound is a bit rubbish too, including some highly dubious *Mega lo Mania*-style speech samples. The gameplay is a bit more tricky to voice opinion on however. The blend of strategy and shoot-'em-up work well creating what initially seems like a reasonably enjoyable Amiga full price game. But the problem is that you get to see everything on your first go – the one planet to conquer, the five shoot-'em-up terrains – so the excitement of exploration is completely lost. Even though it will take a long time to become a good player, Mr and Mrs Bored may well be round for tea in the meanwhile, if you know what I mean.

● *RICH PELLEY*

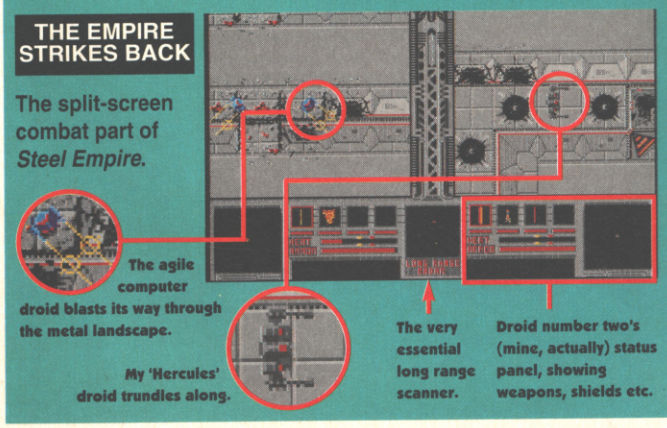
THE BOTTOM LINE

An enjoyable futuristic war game, but a little too thin for comfort. More worlds to conquer and some extra features would have been nice.

63 PERCENT

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

The split-screen combat part of *Steel Empire*.



imagine. No expense has been spared in splashing specifications, formations and performance figures all over the place – it gets a bit bewildering at times – and the result is surprisingly realistic. If you'll forgive the lack of pace, the atmosphere could almost be described as tense. And you even get a 'North Atlantic Convoys' expansion disk thrown in for free, which makes for a welcome change from the standard 'Showdown in the North Atlantic' disk.

All this paints a clear picture of the ideal *Harpoon* player: terribly into war, weaponry, and battle plans (and perhaps a bit of a ship-spotter on the side); patient, with a very slow metabolism; plenty of cash; and above all, prepared to allow for the requisite six days of solid manual-studying before diving in. I doubt I'll be playing it for much longer myself, but I can think of plenty of people who might. (Though I'd rather not).

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Lots of highly detailed boating fun, but too expensive and badly programmed for anyone other than a real enthusiast.
64 PERCENT

4D SPORTS DRIVING

Publisher: Mindscape
Price: £25.99
Author: DSI
Release: Out now

Right, I'm off. What I don't know is that on top of the the ramp someone's put a whacking great right hander. And if I don't slow down, I'm concrete fodder.

Options, options and yet more options. Slap in your disk and you're immediately faced with more options than an incontinent dachshund in a forest. But this is no bad thing. *Hard Drivin'* (probably *4D Sports Driving*'s closest equivalent) made a novel arcade game, but proved to be fatally lacking in depth when pruned and condensed for its appearance on the Amiga. Mindscape are obviously aware of this, and have made sure they've beefed-up their version of essentially the same game by offering just about every option they could think of. There's (deep breath) a choice of 11 high-performance cars to wreck, the option to race against any one of six dare-devil opponents, an action replay feature that would put the BBC to shame (complete with a choice of camera angles, zoom and pan), a selection of tracks to explore and a course editor – allowing you to let your masochistic streak get the better of you.

What all this boils down to is three basic modes of play. Firstly, you can race against the clock with a view to getting your name at the top of each track's 'fastest lap' table. This involves a lot of crashing, a lot of working out the maximum speed that each obstacle can be taken at, and a lot of perseverance.

Alternatively, you can pit your driving prowess against the six computer opponents. 'Smokin' Joe Stalin, Cherri Chassis (!) – it's probably an insult, but I'm not quite sure how – and Skid Vicious (to name but three) are all just itching to leave you with the bitter taste of burnt rubber in your mouth. The opponents skills vary, so take them one at a time as your own abilities develop.

Lastly, you can chose to play around with the course editor. This is where you get to position your own obstacles to create either a nice, straightforward route for a sedate cruise, or a nightmare concrete jungle that could never be described as a major contribution to road safety. Jumps, corkscrews, tunnels, 360 loops (hey, why not? Mindscape never claimed to offer realism), banks and even various track surfaces – all can be dotted around the place to your heart's content.

More options. At the start of the game, before the protection routine asks for a password you can tailor the graphics to optimise either driving speed or background detail. This is useful, though, to be honest, after a while you'll find yourself opting for the high-speed experience every time.

Graphically, *4D Sports Driving* is fairly impressive – it's smoother than *Hard Drivin'*, and fast enough to keep you on your toes. But don't forget that essentially this is an driving simulator – not a seat-of-your-pants racing game – so the pace remains fairly sedate throughout. The 3D (god knows what the extra 'D' in the title means) remains sturdy, with only the occasional glitch to spoil the atmosphere.

I suppose the cars handle realistically and there's a lot to be explored. But at the end of the day it is only a *Hard Drivin'* clone, and it won't keep you enthralled for months (and the continual disk-swapping is a pain in the bum). As a bit of fun, though, *4D Sports Driving* comes recommended – it's a definite improvement over previous Amiga incarnations of the 4D Sports series.

● *NEIL WEST*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Hard Drivin' with knobs on. Features galore give a much-needed shot in the arm to a basic (even if graphically impressive) game. Great for fans of the genre (a horrible cliché – but true), but not for learner drivers.
69 PERCENT

When it comes to game names, there's none worse than...

BOROBODUR

Publisher: Thalamus
Price: £25.99
Authors: Pieter Ofdam, Reinier V Vliet (music)
Release: March

What a crap name. *Borobodur*. It just screams 'Nothing!' at you from the off, doesn't it? You try to imagine a game at the top of the charts being called *Borobodur*, but however hard you concentrate, you simply can't do it. It makes you wonder if Thalamus actually employ any market research people – 'Yeah, we're going to call this one *Borobodur*. Extensive tests have shown that anything up to two people out of every 100 can remember the name and spell it correctly, sometimes even two or three minutes after hearing it.' If you call a game *Borobodur*, you might as well run it with the slogan 'So anonymous even we've forgotten it already.'

But anyway, there are probably four or five of you out there who haven't been completely put off by the pathetic excuse for a title and want to know about the game, so here goes. *Borobodur* (I have to look at the disks every time I go to type the name, y'know) is a straightforward enough platform game, superficially in the same vein as *First Samurai* or *Wolfchild*. It's got some nice parallax scrolling, but – you'll love this bit – it's very slow, in fact, it's so slow that if you fall off a platform further than about twice the height of your character, the scrolling can't keep up. So what happens? That's right, you fall off the bottom of the screen and die, even if there was actually a platform directly beneath you. Great, eh? Top-quality programming there for you to spend £26 of your hard-earned money on, eh? Well worth playing for hours on end if there's every chance you're going to fall through a solid platform, die and have to start again (the 'continue' system is actually more a 'start all over again at the beginning of the level with everything you've collected replaced and all the problems de-solved' system)

Thalamus' *Borobodur* – If only it was faster, tighter, less mean on the player, and had a brand new name.

So forgettable, we've forgotten the name of this one already.

because the programmers were too bloody stupid to use graphics that their coding skills were equal to the task of keeping pace with, eh? No, I don't think so either. Still, the game does have some good points. Some of the problems you have to solve are pleasantly taxing (ie you *do* have to think about them, but not too hard), and you can choose not to watch the intro and game-over sequences (which is a definite blessing).

All the same, while this isn't the worst game we've ever seen here at AMIGA POWER, the question has to be asked – 'With at least a dozen games in exactly the same style already available and all of them 20 times better than this one, why should I bother?' And that's a question I don't have an answer for.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Big and not-bad graphics (if a bit on the crude side), but when it comes to gameplay *Borobodur* is hopelessly lost forever in the craplands of mediocrity. What's the point in ever releasing something this half-hearted as a full price, three-disk game? Ask Thalamus.
34 PERCENT

BUDGET

It's another month of re-releases, with old forgotten gems like *Resolution 101* and *Future Basketball* getting a new lease of life. This month also sees the first Amiga release of *Jet Set Willy*, and a Code Masters compilation for only £7.99!

MANIX

Q-Bert gets updated in *Manix*, but that vital spark of energy and addiction gets lost along the way.

Publisher: GBH
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Spooky cosmic vibe scenario! If you played our issue nine coverdisk *Puggles*, you'll be familiar with the *Q-Bert* concept – bouncing across lots of little squares changing their colour for no acceptably-explained reason. *Manix* revives that idea in a game which owes pretty much everything to the venerable arcade classic, with just a hint of *Populous* thrown in on the graphical display style.

You start each round in a contoured island landscape of coloured squares, which are turned to different colours by a clutch of (presumably paint-filled) hand grenades. You bounce around changing the colours, avoiding enemies and destroying more hand grenades before they go off, in an attempt to restore the island to its original colours. The sloping squares deflect your character, so you have to be careful not to bounce into the water which surrounds the islands (as water tends to do), and as you progress through the levels, various power-ups and bonuses appear randomly to be collected. There are two different game styles – one where the squares cycle through the colour sequence continually and one where they stop when they get to the right colour – which makes for two very different types of gameplay (the former more of a puzzle, the latter purely arcade-centred), but neither of them are really very gripping. This is possibly due to the small play area that you have to work with at any one time, but it could equally be the fact that for the first seven levels or so there isn't really any obstacle to your successfully completing each round. By the time things get harder you simply can't be bothered playing through all the easy stuff again to get to the tricky bit, and the game disk ends up right back in the box. Such is life.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Nicely-presented and well programmed, but the vital spark isn't there, leaving *Manix* as one of those experiences which just washes right over you without leaving any lasting impression at all. Some nice features, tacked on to nothing very much.

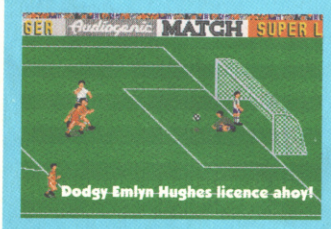
54 PERCENT

SOCCER STARS

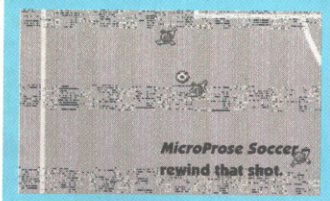
Publisher: Empire
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

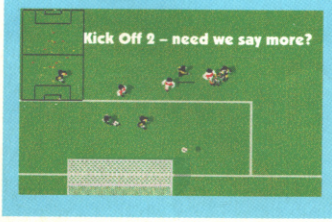
Er, thanks, Matt. Actually, as soccer games go you couldn't really plea for two finer than *Kick Off 2* and *Microprose Soccer*. Or at least if you did, no one would hear you.

Completely ignoring its dedicated following of people who think it is crap, we still made *Kick Off 2* a reputable number 7 in our Top 100 Games. Playing in the familiar up/down scrolling arcade-style with you ceremoniously controlling the player nearest to the ball, its indisputable selling point was that it plays nothing like football at all. The ball, you see, doesn't stick to your feet (you have to use short kicks to dribble) so at the end of the day it ends up more like a giant game of pin ball, or (more probably) something. It sounds weird but boils down to a fast, frantic if slightly tricky at first little animal, its only problem lying in the rather puny graphics. I reckon that if I actually liked this sort of thing, I'd like *Kick Off 2* lots.



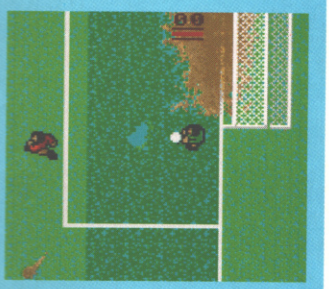
Dodgy Emlyn Hughes licence ahoy!


MicroProse Soccer rewind that shot.


Kick Off 2 – need we say more?

MicroProse Soccer is back on familiar ground. Again, a bird's eye supplies the view, but for your ease the ball sticks to your feet whilst dribbling. Trick shots also lie conveniently at hand – headers, swerves and overhead kicks are but a swift and trouble-free wibble of the joystick away. The slick programming, the delicious graphics, the sound (for which an appropriate adjective escapes me) and the distinct lack of flaws in gameplay help add up to a game to certainly give *Kick Off 2* a run for its money.

You see, every gameplay ingredient in the above two games has been carefully selected and expertly blended to give near flawless results, with every nook, cranny, bit and byte of the Amiga's memory used wisely. Congratulations go to *Kick Off 2* for the sheer combination of gameplay options available – up to four footy-game-fans can join in at once (if you could ever find them, and an adaptor) on rival or the same sides playing with or against the computer. *MicroProse Soccer* flaunts an indoor football option which is far better than the outdoor version in my opinion anyway.


Gazza and his unfeasibly crap computer licence. Just when you though *Soccer Stars* was going to be a top quality compilation, the 'lovable' Geordie makes an appearance. Oh dear...

Indeed, in the hectic world of Soccer games, *Kick Off 2* and *MicroProse Soccer* really are sheer bliss. Any sign of management is thankfully ignored, option screens do not have to be waded through, merely called up when desired. And whilst in play, you can actually see, move, tackle and kick when are where desired. And, thank someone, not one celebrity footballer rears his head.

Oh, and the other two games on the compilation? *Gazza 2* and *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* – they're both so bad they're not even worth talking about any more. Handy, really, as there wasn't room anyway.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

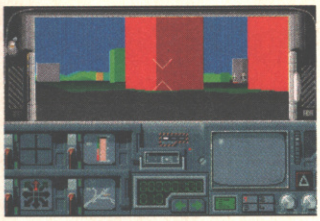
Kick Off 2 I'd give 92, *Microprose Soccer*'s worth 90, *Gazza 2* about 35 and *Emlyn* around 30. Giving an average 61.75. Which rounds down, as I'm in a bit of a bad mood, to...

61 PERCENT

RESOLUTION 101

Publisher: GBH
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Criminals have a pretty good time of it in the future. As serious crime starts to get out of control, the Government passes



***Resolution 101* – a fast and groovy update on the old *Battlezone* game style.**

Nice 3D effect, shame that the game doesn't live up to the smooth, classy action of the PC version.

Resolution 101, which allows convicted felons to be pardoned if they can terminate another major bad guy who's still at loose on the streets. To help out, the authorities kindly supply an armed hover skimmer, and allow the 'little' crims to keep any money they manage to steal from the 'big' crims and spend it on improvements to their craft and weaponry. Sounds like great fun to me.

You play one of these 'little' crims, and your aim is to zoom around a minimalistic 3D landscape (I seem to be using that phrase a lot this month), zapping lesser baddies until you've collected enough 'evidence' to go after the 'big' crim of that level (there are 12 levels). Gameplay-wise we're in straightforward shoot-'em-up territory, but where this scores over the similar *Thunderstrike* is that it's fast, fairly liberally spread with zapping action, and very atmospheric. Atmosphere comes from the basic but effective cityscape (complete with roads, rivers etc), the way the sky lightens and darkens through each 'day', the lightning strikes which announce the materialisation of enemies and the generally futuristic and just slightly abstract feel of things. The biggest drawback is that it does get pretty repetitive pretty quickly, but it's sufficiently exciting beforehand to mean that you'll always enjoy picking it up for a quick blast now and again, and that's always okay by me.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Fast and groovy shoot-'em-up with lots of top-quality baddie-battling action, if very little in the way of depth. An arcade game, would you believe?

77 PERCENT

THUNDER STRIKE

Publisher: GBH
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

It's funny that the month after we mention top ZX81 classic *3D Defender* in 'Don't Quote Us', GBH should choose to re-release a game which is almost exactly that. *Thunderstrike* looks almost like a flight sim, but in actual fact plays in a manner distinctly reminiscent of the near-legendary Sinclair classic.

In *Thunderstrike* you fly around a contoured 3D vector landscape, blasting enemy saucers and protecting, ooh, something or other really important, I shouldn't wonder. (Sorry, background fans, but I got a bit bored of the manual after it took a rather poor-quality pop at *F-29 Retaliator*, and stopped reading). You also have to destroy saucer generators (sort of like in *Gauntlet*), and play efficiently and excitingly for the TV audience (it's all supposed to be a sort of game show, y'see) in order to get the referees to upgrade your ship for subsequent rounds. You can choose various starting set-ups (there are five ships of different capabilities to fly, and you can fiddle with the graphic detail to improve speed by removing the stippling effect, which is incredibly ugly anyway), and there are 50 levels to clear before you are awarded the ultimate accolade of 'Defender Of The Ground' (woo!).

Sadly, it's all a bit slow and dull, and the bad guys are few and far between much of the time, making the game a lot of uneventful trekking around a near-featureless landscape aimlessly looking for things to shoot. The contoured landscape is quite impressive (as long as you turn the stippling off, anyway), but the gameplay leaves a lot to be desired.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

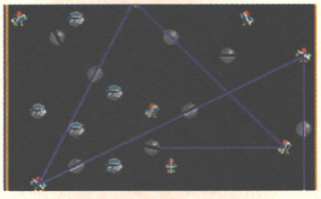
THE BOTTOM LINE

Moderately entertaining blaster that's not as complicated as first impressions might suggest, but unfortunately lack of depth isn't compensated for by excitement. More 'interesting' than anything.

57 PERCENT

MINDBENDER

Publisher: GBH
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now



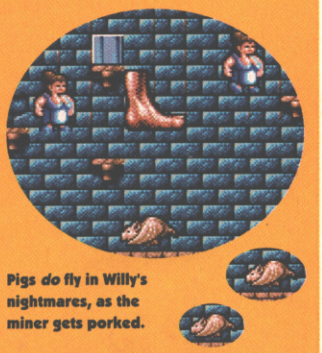
Bending minds and minding bends in *Mindbender* (*You're fired again – Ed*).

If you remember Gremlin's light-beam-reflecting puzzler *Deflektor*, you'll be right at home with this one, as it's basically the

JET SET WILLY 2

In space no one can hear you play classic platform games. (*Can't get the staff –Ed*)

Publisher: Software Projects
Price: £9.99
Release: Out now



Pigs *do* fly in Willy's nightmares, as the miner gets porked.

Hard on the heels of *Manic Miner* (see issue nine) comes Software Projects' second attempt at converting a long-lost Spectrum classic. Sadly though, in a blow for nostalgic reviewers everywhere, this time they've not bothered to include the original, crap-graphics version. What you get is a beefed-up 1992-style conversion, not of *Manic Miner*'s hugely popular follow-up *Jet Set Willy*, but of *Jet Set Willy 2*, which was a little-known and not especially successful 8-bit sequel which was essentially the same as the original *Jet Set Willy* game, but with about 60 new rooms inserted into the game map.

In the Amiga game the screen scrolls and the old room names disappear from the screen, but the platform layouts, baddies and movement patterns are more or less identical to the original.

The graphics have obviously been tarted up to be suitable for the Amiga, although they're still far from state-of-the-art, and the music, in common with the 16-bit version of *Manic Miner*, is unspeakably awful, far worse than even the old Speccy used to manage. But enough technicality, how does the actual game stand up after seven long years?

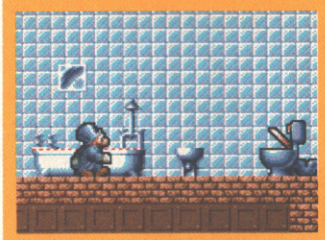
Pretty well, as it happens. This is still a great game, but I do have doubts over whether there's enough action in it to satisfy hardened '90s gamers. *JSW* was never the fastest game in the world, and in this version too there's a lot of wandering around without a lot going on to keep you interested.

The bigger graphics make it harder to get a clear idea of how the different areas of the map relate to each other too, which robs the game of some of its atmosphere. Then again, Willy's mansion is still a fascinating place to explore, and it'll take you a hell of a long time to find your way into all its hidden nooks and crannies.

To be honest with you, I'm not entirely sure how to take this one. For old *JSW* fans like myself, it's a refreshing and highly enjoyable blast from the past, but the more sophisticated tastes of today's game players might find it all a bit lacking. It's at a budget price, though, so why not try it out?

Just this once, risk a tenner and find out for yourself.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*



Feeling flushed – Willy begins the game in his mansion toilet.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A better buy than many other ordinary budgies, so you have to say in its field it's something of a success. Worth having, if only as a historical artefact.

70 PERCENT

Kamikaze – **Code Masters' 200th attempt at a *Flying Shark* clone.**

SAS Combat Simulator – **well 'ard and as violent as our Ed.**

QUATTRO FIGHTERS

Publisher: Code Masters
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

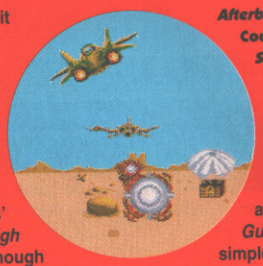
This is the second attempt from Code Masters to launch their 'Quattro' compilation series (hugely popular on the 8-bit machines) on the Amiga. They tried it at the beginning of last year, but at the price point of £12.99 for four old games, the packs stayed firmly on shop shelves in a manner which suggested they'd been nailed down. This time around the Codies have stuck with the original concept behind the series (a four-game collection, all previously released, for the price of one original title), so *Quattro Fighters* gives you *Mig 29 Soviet Fighter*, *Kamikaze*, *SAS Combat Simulator* and *Guardian Angel* in one box for £7.99.

At less than £2 each, then, these games are cheaper than a lot of PD. But are they better games?

Well, the short answer is 'Yes', but that's a bit too short, so here's a slightly longer one. *Mig 29 Soviet Fighter* is an *Afterburner* clone, which is to say that you're piloting a plane which flies into the screen and shoots at lots of other planes and stuff. Complicated it's not, technically amazing it's not (in fact, it only just reaches 'competent'), but it is tricky and surprisingly addictive.

Kamikaze is a *SWIV*-type vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up, not up to the same standards as the Codies' own *Violator* and *Sky High Stuntman*, but decent enough all the same. It's actually very close to the arcade game *Flying Shark*, and if you fancy a slightly harder (especially if you don't use the simultaneous two-player mode) version of that, you'll be well catered for in *Kamikaze*.

SAS Combat Simulator is one of the Codies' earliest 16-bit games and it shows, but it's still a passable *Ikari Warriors* clone. There's not a lot else to say about it, really (other than there are two distinct types of gameplay in it, the *Ikari Warriors* multi-directional-scrolling bit and a horizontally-scrolling *Kung Fu Master*-style sort-of beat-'em-up bit), so I'll move swiftly on to *Guardian Angel*. Which could be a bit of a mistake, actually, as *Guardian Angel* is so simple an *SAS Combat Simulator* review looks like War And Peace by comparison. A very basic horizontally-scrolling beat-'em-up (not at all unlike the similar section from *SAS Combat*, actually), *Guardian Angel* is distinguished by some lovely touches of humour, but not very much else. It's probably the weakest title in the compilation, but it's still good for a few hours fun.



Afterburner **gets the full monty, Codies-style in *MiG-29 Soviet Fighter*.**

All in all, then, a respectable collection of games, and it's at a truly remarkable price. Which makes it, I guess, something of a bargain.
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

Guardian Angel – **mad, bad and utterly dangerous to know. The weakest game on the compilation, yet still good fun for a couple of hours.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

A varied collection of simple arcade-orientated games, none of which are astonishingly good, but none of which are horrendously bad either. Don't expect world-beating stuff, but do expect a good deal of no-nonsense fun. Very good value for money.

80 PERCENT

same game. You 'control' a beam of light, which emanates from a fixed point on screen and is reflected around by mirrors, which you can rotate in place to alter the beam's path. The idea is to destroy lots of obstacles which litter the screen, then direct the beam out of the exit which opens when all the obstacles are eliminated. Various other elements come into play (such as fixed mirrors, lightbulbs which have to be switched on before the exit will open and, ooh, lots of other stuff), but the essence of the gameplay remains constant throughout. You can tackle the many screens in pretty much whichever order you like, and there's also a construction kit to devise your own screens with when you get fed up of the ones you start with. (I never understand the point of these – surely if you devise a screen yourself, you're immediately going to know how to do it? And who ever really invents screens and gives them to their friends to play? No-one, that's who). Anyway, it's all very competently put together and the difficulty curve is well judged, even if most of the time completing a screen is a matter of trial and error rather than any great mental strain. If you're a *Deflektor* fan in need of a new challenge, or a puzzle-lover with an eye for something different, this'll do you just fine. Personally, I couldn't really be bothered with it after four levels or so, but that's reviewers for you.
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Good fun in a 'never really sets your heart aflame with excitement' kind of way, and it'll certainly take you a while to finish all the levels. The only doubt is whether your interest will last that long.

63 PERCENT

ULTIMATE GOLF

Publisher: GBH
Price: £9.99
Release: Out now

Someone who used to be Greg Norman, but isn't any more, lines up for a shot.

Now here's product confidence for you. Not only have GBH put this out at a time when the world is still stunned by *MicroProse Golf* and *PGA Tour*, but they've put it out on the GBH Gold label, which makes it £2 more expensive than its only competitor in the budget golf market, *World Class Leaderboard*. Unfortunately for GBH, *World Class Leaderboard* is also the better game.

Ultimate Golf (which I'm sure used to be *Greg Norman's Ultimate Golf*, incidentally) works in a similar fashion to the US Gold title, with the view of the course being built up before your eyes for each shot, and hitting the ball controlled by two swing meters governing strength and amount of hook/slice. So far so fair enough, and indeed the game more or less works as a functioning golf sim. Where it falls down is in the shoddy presentation (whereby you're frequently unsure if you or a computer-controlled player is actually playing at any given moment), in the long wait between shots, and in the unconvincing ball movement, in which your ball often looks like it's attached to a piece of invisible elastic. Also, the sound effects and animation are lacklustre in the extreme, and the grid effect which is overlaid on the course to portray contours only really serves to make it look artificial and a little bit tacky.

To be absolutely fair, this is a playable enough game in its own right, but when put up against the other golf titles on the market, either full-price or budget, it lacks the quality to compete.
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

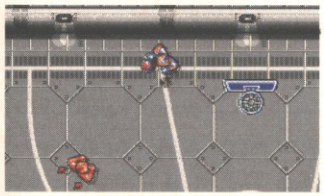
Not terrible by any means, but not in the same league in gameplay terms as even the ageing *Leaderboard*. Fails to justify the higher price point.

55 PERCENT

FUTURE BASKETBALL

Publisher: Hi Tec
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Never mind *Tip Off*, this is where the real basketball action is! Originally released by Hewson a year or so ago – to no real effect – *Future Basketball* is in some ways a poor man's *Speedball 2*. It's essentially a fairly straightforward basketball game (ie it's nothing like *Tip Off* at all), except without all that tedious mucking about with 'no-contact' rules. In *Future Basketball*, flying rugby tackles on enemy players (with or without possession of the ball) are perfectly acceptable, as is knocking members of the opposing team onto the stun mines which are spread liberally



***Future Basketball* – Hewson's little known gem from yesteryear. It's basketball. It's set in the future. And it's violent.**

around the court or flattening them with homing missiles. Yep, this is a game that really sorts out the men from the effeminate soft boys you usually find at basketball matches (*That's fighting talk from someone 5'8" tall -Ed*), and while it isn't as fast-moving or sophisticated (ahem) as the Bitmap Bros' classic of brutality, it's still absolutely loads of fun. Believe me, you haven't lived until you've sent one of your players hurtling full-stretch into an opponent, knocking the ball from his hands and sending him flying backwards into a landmine...

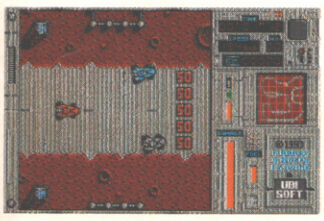
That aside, there's not a lot to say about *Future Basketball*. It's got all the usual options you'd expect to find in this kind of sport sim, and there are four difficulty levels, the easiest of which gives the most hopeless player a decent chance to win and the toughest of which is a severe test for the most talented. Really, basically, it's a bit fab.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Simplistic and perhaps short-lived future sport game with all the features you expect from a future sport (power-ups and violence). It was maybe a bit thin at full-price, but makes a brilliant budget game. Get it.
82 PERCENT

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now



Supercar days are here again in the ridiculously named *Jupiter's Masterdrive*.

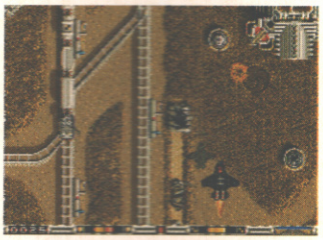
Hurrah! It's a reappearance of the Ubi Soft driving game with a name so wacky you'll probably have to take a couple of asprin after reading it. And what a splendid game it is too. On the surface it's a simple overhead-view racing game with smoothly scrolling courses and smart (if slightly spooky) graphics. Probe a little deeper, however, and you'll realise that your car's actually racing round the moons of Jupiter, with you driving it by remote control. Weird! To spice things up even further the courses are littered with stuff that, sort of, 'does things' when you drive over it. Best of all, though, each car is equipped with a gun to take out its opponents. This can be upgraded between races, along with your engine, brakes etc. It's monstrously playable, just as much fun as *Super Sprint*, *Supercars* or any of the other games it's based on, and certainly on a par with Codies games of the same ilk. A 'definite', in other words.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Nothing spectacular, just lots of Gallic fun at a 'you're laughing' price.
70 PERCENT

BLACK HORNET

Publisher: Hi Tec
Price: £7.99
Release: Out Now



***Black Hornet* – it's black, it's a hornet, and... it sounds like a Spectrum.**

Oh look, it's yet another budget *SWIV* rip–er, tribute. This time you're flying a chunky black bomber thing, and the major difference between this and every other vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up is that your plane carries bombs instead of guns. What this means in practice is that you can't kill enemies simply by getting them in your line of sight – you also have to get the range right, otherwise your bombs simply fly over their heads and explode harmlessly on the ground.

To help out you can alter the height at which you fly (and hence the distance it takes for the bombs to reach the ground), but this puts you in danger from obstacles like mountains and bridges. You can buy all the usual power-ups from shops scattered around the landscape, but you have to choose quickly as you can still be shot and damaged while your plane sits on the runway conveniently placed outside the shop. Which is a bloody stupid idea if you ask me.

Graphically the game is very pretty, but soundwise it's a complete nightmare, with a choice given at the start between grating sound effects (ie they sound like someone grating steel) reminiscent of a Spectrum game loading, unlistenably awful music (one day Amiga music will be written by musicians, not programmers, and that will be a very happy day indeed), or blissful complete silence. As for gameplay, well, no there isn't any. *Black Hornet* was obviously written by someone with no grasp of the mechanics of what makes a good shoot-'em-up, and the endlessly repetitive nature of the enemy landscape and attacks will very probably send you to sleep before you get anywhere near the end of the first level. If you do manage that, you'll find yourself in a second level which is almost identical to the first one only green, and if you can muster the interest to persevere through to the other two levels then you're a far more tolerant person than I am. It's a bit of a shame, because there are some innovative touches here, as well as a few neat bits of window-dressing (particularly in the behaviour of the trains), but it'll only take you about five minutes of play to wipe out the pleasant memory of those, and then another five minutes to get completely and utterly bored of the whole thing. Which makes, er, 10 minutes' fun.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Pretty blaster with gameplay so crushingly tedious that I'll personally buy anyone who can play it 10 times in a row without suffering permanent psychological damage a pint. Mind you, the Ed likes it.
38 PERCENT

MYSTICAL

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £9.99
Release: Out now

Spells, spells and more spells. The only thing *Mystical* lacks is gameplay.

Good heavens – my third French disinterment in as many minutes. This time we're looking at an ex-Infogrames number which (if the back of the box is anything to go by) met with critical acclaim when it first appeared a year or so ago. Well, from Your Amiga and New Atari User at least, whoever they might be.

It allots you the role of a trainee wizard, charged with the task of recovering a load of important spells you've accidentally released.

And thus the scene is set for an unremarkable vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up which will keep you hooked for about as long as it takes to realise that that's what it is. The only feature that in any way commands attention is the enormous and beautifully executed range of spells at your disposal. Baddies can be frozen, burnt, turned to stone... even scared to death.

Someone must have amused himself for hours thinking all those up. It's nice to see the potions/spells/magic idea used for once in a way that doesn't involve huge lists of numbers and action points, but that's about it really.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Slick, eye-catching and playable, but also dull, repetitive and highly switch-offable. Less than essential, basically.
50 PERCENT

SIR FRED

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

***Sir Fred* – it's really rather great in a 'it shouldn't be any good' kind of way.**

Despite bringing back fond memories of an identically-named Spectrum game I used to be quite close to, this is actually a re-release of an obscure Ubi Soft title in which the eponymous knight is attempting to restore himself to his full height, having been shrunk by an evil dwarf. And this he does by – oh horrors – walking round killing things. (Surely there are other ways to get through life?). He doesn't even do it terribly well, hampered by a lumpish gait and a tendency to respond to your joystick commands just too late to avoid getting killed. It's very crude, and perhaps rather Spectrummy after all.

But happily, the game is redeemed (at least in part) by its unmistakably French humour, which pervades everything from the intro sequence to the little gnomes who run up to you, pull a face and fire their catapults before running off again. Blink and you'll miss most of it (except, possibly, for Sir Fred's prolonged histrionics upon getting killed).

Despite being to all intents and purposes a bit crap, *Sir Fred*'s a game that's impossible to hate and might conceivably just be worth buying.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A non-event as far as the Amiga's concerned, but curiously likeable anyway.
69 PERCENT

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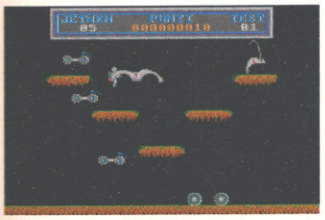
PD

We've had quite a few letters complaining about the rather reduced size of the PD column lately, but we've decided to do another single page one anyway because we're in a bit of a grumpy mood this month. Grumpiest of all is, as ever, Stuart Campbell...

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

Well, that's not strictly true, bargain fans. Things are beginning to pick up momentum again in the PD world after a very quiet period over the festive season, but we still haven't received anywhere near enough decent stuff – we review *games* only, remember – to fill two pages, so we're going to have to stick with the reduced size until it starts coming in again. Still, you might not get much in the way of quantity this month, but the quality's as high as it's ever been. Read on...

JETMAN
(Start, disk 1446)

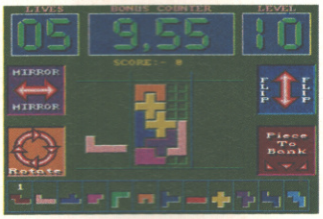


16-bit games with sub-8-bit graphics – a strange idea, but that's *Jetman*

We're always keen on Amiga PD conversions of old 8-bit classics here at AMIGA POWER, so you can doubtless imagine our excitement when we heard of this clone of the seminal Spectrum shoot-'em-up *Jet-Pac*. We could hardly contain ourselves when the disk arrived in the office, and when it actually loaded up... er, well, containing ourselves suddenly became a lot easier. You could have done it with a couple of Tupperware biscuit boxes, in fact. This version retains only the basic concept of the Speccy original, with the graphics, sound and platform layouts changed, and it has to be said they're not changed for the better. Graphically, in particular, this resembles a particularly rough Acorn Electron game, and the sound effects are about as basic as bangs and beeps ever get these days. Control and movement is a bit jerky too. In fact this is pretty much everything the real thing wasn't – sloppy, crude and repetitive. It's still moderately playable, but if you stop making allowances for how much you loved the original game (or if you never saw the original game) and judge this on its own merits, it really is pretty dire stuff.

VERDICT: A travesty of a clone of a once-beautiful game, this is the kind of thing which could yet save the Spectrum from an early grave, and dig one for Amiga PD 8-bit conversions at the same time. ★★

DILEMMA
(Start, disk 1543)



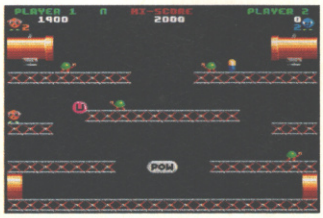
"I'm in a bit of a *Dilemma* with this one." "Mm, great cars, them Dilemmas."

This is a neat little *AMOS*-created puzzle game which is a cross between *Tangram* and *Tetris*. It's basically a derivative of the ancient Chinese wooden-block game, where you're given a set of pieces of various shapes and an area to fill with them. You can't have any gaps or overlapping pieces, and in this version you've also got to complete each level inside a time limit. The difference between this and *Tangram* is that here the area to be filled is always a rectangle (instead of the animal shapes and so on more frequently used) and instead of triangles and parallelograms and suchlike, the pieces you use are *Tetris*-style right-angled blocks. You can rotate the blocks in 90-degree steps or flip them across vertical or horizontal axes, and everything is controlled comfortably by mouse. You can start on any level up to the 30th (which is so hard none of us could do it, so we're not sure if there are any more after that), but you'd have to be a bit mad. And that's it. Like all the best puzzles it's totally simple, seriously mindbending, and well groovy, and it's accompanied on the disk (Assassins Disk 16, compilation fans) by a *Pac-Man* clone, a *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit* blaster which you might find strangely familiar (ahem) and a *3D Construction Kit* effort called *Wastelands*. Something – in a very real sense – for everyone here, and worth the price of the disk for *Dilemma* alone, so get yourself a copy today, if not last week sometime.

VERDICT: A fine effort, and another excellent addition to the ranks of fab Amiga PD puzzlers. ★★★★

DOODY
(Start, disk 1539)

You may have seen this on the coverdisk of our sister magazine Amiga Format last month, or you may be familiar with it in its former life as the original *Mario Bros* arcade game. It's a curious single-screen platform thing, in which you play a strange blobby little character who leaps around headbutting the floor under killer turtles (and later on other equally unlikely creatures), who then flip over and are defenceless against being kicked off the screen. Classically simple, playable and addictive, the coin-op was a great little game and this conversion of it is almost flawless (except in terms of graphics, which are a bit different to avoid lots of Nintendo lawsuit misery), right down to the sound effects. It's extra fab as a simultaneous two-player game, where both players have to rush around frantically competing for the points, but even by yourself you'll have loads of fun with this one. In fact, the worst thing about *Doody* as far as we're concerned is that someone else has already put it on their coverdisk. Sassenrassenfrassen...



Mario Bros* without Mario Bros in *Doody

VERDICT: Really nifty platform arcade game which shows that the Amiga can do console games just as well as any console can, and as PD has to be worth... ★★★★★

BIP
(Warpdrive PD)

Since AMIGA POWER came into being all those months ago (it only *feels* like years), there have been three games played more in the office than any others. There's our All-Time No.1 *Rainbow Islands* of course, then there's *Speedball 2* which has been the setting for many titanic tussles between myself and Mark (usually to the entirely appropriate sounds of 'We Love You' by The Rolling Stones), and finally there's been *Bip*. A version of one of the oldest video games ever created, *Bip* is a two-player only dogfighting game where you control a biplane each. The idea is to shoot the other player out of the sky, without being shot out of the sky yourself, crashing into any buildings or stalling your plane and plunging sack-of-potatoes-like to the ground. First one to blast their opponent 15 times wins the game. A less complicated game you couldn't hope to find, which is why we uncomplicated boys and girls love it to little bits. Everyone can play this, from your creaky old grandad who probably flew one of the things for real in WW1 to the youngest mambers of the family (as long as they're old enough to hold a joystick, they can play *Bip*), and all of them will love it because it appeals to that most basic of human instincts – the competitive urge to get one over on someone else. Get *Bip* and you too can make all your friends and relations hate you.

***Bip* – is it the second best two-player game after *Speedball 2* or what?**

VERDICT: Brilliant little game (with some other nifty arcade stuff on the disk into the bargain) which is ideal for playing in between bouts of *Knights Of The Sky*. Only limitation is that it needs two players. ★★★★

This month's supplier addresses: START COMPUTER SYSTEMS, 20 Holmside, Sunderland, SR1 3JE Tel 091 565 2506 (this is the correct number, not the one we printed a couple of months back – sorry, folks); WARPDRIVE PD, 110 Burton Avenue, Balby, Doncaster, DN4 8BB Tel 0302 859715.

DEFINITION OF sound

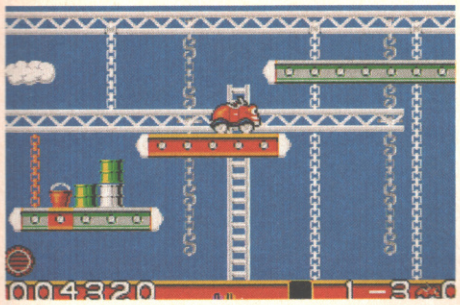
THE GREAT LEAP FORWARDS

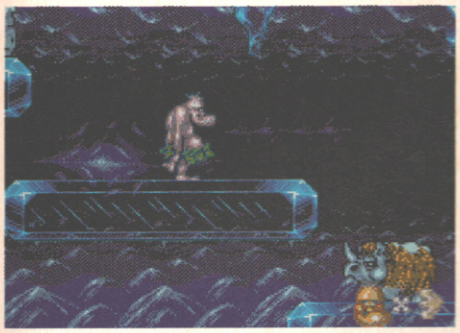
Our unrivalled series of buyer's guides jumps up to four pages as we tackle one of the biggest genres of them all...

Moving on up – platform heroes and nasties try to out-shine each other in an outstanding technicolour display.

Okay, it's time for the big one. There have probably been more games released on the Amiga with a platforms-and-ladders theme than of any other style. (Indeed, you could probably say the same about computer games as a whole). Since the arcade game *Donkey Kong* launched the genre (and in the process the biggest computer game character ever, Mario), the platform game has captured the imagination of programmers more than anything else. The earliest computer sighting was probably an old Atari game called *Miner 2049er*, but the most celebrated incarnation is almost certainly the legendary Spectrum (and then every other machine under the sun, including the 16-bits late last year) classic, *Manic Miner*. Of course, things have improved dramatically since then. Or have they..?

Well, let's start off by taking a look at that Amiga conversion of the grandaddy of them all, *Manic Miner* itself. A madcap trip through the tortured mind of one Matthew Smith (the original 'whizzkid programmer'), *Manic Miner* brought mutant telephones, killer toilets, wacky amoebatrons and crashing Skylabs (ask your dad) into the consciousness and conversation of a whole generation of videogamers, much to the consternation of worried parents up and down the country, let us tell you. 20 screens of tricky pattern-learning, pixel-perfect jumping and lightning reaction tests, set against the most imaginative scenario backdrops ever seen, made the





Two different approaches to the cartoon style – above, *Car-Vup*'s bright primary colours . Below, *Chuck Rock*'s, er, blue.

game an instant and enormous smash hit, and when the time came to bring it to the Amiga, the programmers decided not to risk upsetting the formula with any changes of any kind. Thus, an absolutely straight graphics-and-gameplay translation of the original Speccy version was born, but accompanied by a new 90s Amigafied game which beefed up the graphics, increased the screen size (the screen scrolling around to accommodate the new dimensions), and invented new patterns for the baddies, creating effectively a whole new game. This inspired approach kept nostalgia perfectionists and 'using the capabilities of the Amiga' trainspotters alike happy, and only the hideous music let the package down. Cynic-defyingly wonderful.

OUI OUI, JE SUIS UN ROCK STAR

Of course, having dug out all the treasures of the mine, Miner Willy became a very rich man indeed and bought a huge mansion. His adventures in it were immortalised in Software Projects' *Manic Miner* sequel, ***Jet Set Willy***, an even bigger 8-bit smash which was also recently brought to the Amiga. This time the option of playing the original version was abandoned in favour of the updated Amigaified model only (actually a conversion of the little-known *Jet Set Willy* follow-up by the imaginative title of *Jet Set Willy II*), which retained most of the appeal of the actual game, but still lost much of the primitive charm. Still good fun, though, and fully reviewed in this very issue of AMIGA POWER.

TWO SMALL STEPS FOR MANKIND

...which isn't really something you can say about ***Strider***. (© 1992 Tenuous Links Inc.) Originally a stunning arcade game with astonishing graphics, when US Gold converted it across they went for the 'get the gameplay' approach, which in this case was a mistake as the coin-op didn't really have much in the way of gameplay to start with. Sacrificing the gorgeous visuals for a really tacky, fiddly Amiga look left *Strider* without anything special to offer gamers with a hundred platform efforts to choose from, and it didn't do very much. Today it looks like a relic from a bygone age, and while it's still playable it never sets the adrenalin racing. USG followed it up a year later with an unofficial (in the sense that it never appeared in the arcades) sequel, *Strider 2*. Very similar in graphical style to the first game, *Strider 2* mixed in a few extra features to try and pad things out a bit, but nothing with any dramatic effect on the gameplay. It was also extremely hard, far too hard for most players, with the result that nowadays it's been almost completely forgotten.

MAD, BAD, AND...NOT THAT GOOD

Another game which shares with *Strider* the fact that it spawned a near-identical sequel, if not the fact that it wasn't a massive success, is ***Rick Dangerous***. Along with its inspirationally-titled sequel ***Rick Dangerous 2***, *Rick* provided MicroProse with two of the Amiga's most popular games ever, with both the press and the public. Which is odd, as they're both pretty basic platform jobs with the wit and imagination characterised by *Manic Miner* et al replaced for the most part by invisible floor spikes. The sequel at least featured a few different graphic styles and selectable levels for when the frustration got too much, but all that really offered you was the chance to get incredibly annoyed in some different scenery. Both titles look nice in an 8-bitty kind of way, but as far as gameplay goes they're both seriously lacking – a giant memory-testing exam doesn't make for top gaming entertainment in our book. And while we're on the subject of *Rick Dangerous*, let's briefly talk about ***Impossamole***. *Impossamole* is rubbish.

"Rainbow Islands – best Amiga game of all time"

JOLENE, JOLENE

Of course, if you're talking about platform games and sequels, sooner or later you're going to get to ***Switchblade***. Yet another game from Core, the team who brought you *Rick 1*, *Rick 2* and *Impossamole*, *Switchblade* was a charming and atmospheric – if a little short on action – underground explorationfest which was only let down by samey graphics and the ridiculous *Impossamole*-style beat-'em-up element (ie you had to thump your enemies three or four times before they'd die). This made progress through the later levels a tedious and irritating process, but essentially *Switchblade* is still a pretty enjoyable game. It was followed up last year by Gremlin's ***Switchblade II***, which you'd probably imagine to be the sequel. And indeed it is, but in name only. Despite having the same hero and the same graphical style for the first level, *Switchblade II* is much more of an action-packed arcade romp than the careful and slow-paced original. With gorgeous big Japanese-style graphics and lovely control, *Switchblade II* is one of the Amiga's very best platformers, but it's not really the follow-up to *Switchblade*...

NOT EXACTLY A HOWLING SUCCESS

That's an accolade (if that's the right word) which has to go to *Wolfchild*. From the programmer of the original *Switchblade* comes a game reviewed last month (scoring 58 percent) which owes everything except its name to the first game. The gameplay (and indeed many of the enemies) are lifted directly, and the overall feel is that *Wolfchild* is the sequel that never was.

In its own right it's a fairly decent platform potboiler, but it never really inspires in any way, and it's so short you'll have finished it, consigned it to the back of your software shelf and forgotten it ever existed in about the same space of time it takes to read this article.

WAKE ME UP BEFORE YOU POGO

What's that? You want even more platform games with sequels? Oh, alright then. How about ***Nebulus***? One of the all-time classics (evidenced by a No14 placing in the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100), this beautiful tower-ascending game featured gorgeous rotational scrolling and frighteningly addictive gameplay, so a sequel based on the same brilliantly simple 'get to the top and don't fall down' principle seemed like a sure-fire winner.

DEFINITION OF sound

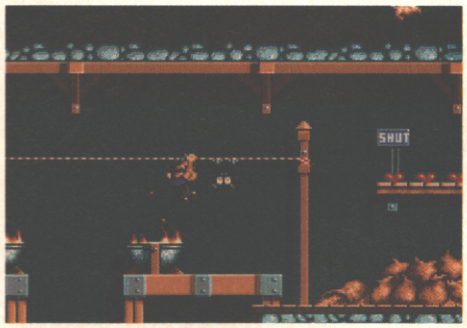
When 21st Century Entertainment finally produced ***Nebulus 2*** in the middle of last year, though, Nebby fans were horrified to encounter a tedious, heartless, over-hard and over-complicated mauling of their favourite game. *Nebulus 2* completely destroyed the magical playability of the original, leaving behind a dull and frustrating trudger which quite frankly isn't interesting enough to warrant wasting any more words on.

YOU JUST CAN'T KID A KIDDER

And finally Cyril (well, as far as games with '2' in their titles go), we come to *Kid Gloves*. As anyone with our second issue coverdisk will know, the original *Kid Gloves* is a sweet and lovely little platform puzzle game with real character and a fair measure of originality, but the recent follow-up (also reviewed last issue at 58 percent, spookily enough) is a right cheat and no mistake. *Kid Gloves 2* is really *Little Beau* from the now-defunct Digital Magic, which is itself really a cruder version of Activision's *Super Wonder Boy*, and nothing at all to do with Millennium's original game. This is a terrible waste of a great character, but it's not a bad game if a Fisher-Price *Super Wonder Boy* sounds like your cup of tea in the first place.

WE'RE FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES

And finally Esther, let's not forget games which have sequels in plot, if not in name. In such a category we'd find ***Bubble Bobble***, →



***Hudson Hawk* (above) might look a bit like *The Blues Brothers*, but *Kid Gloves 2* (below) actually *is Little Beau*!**

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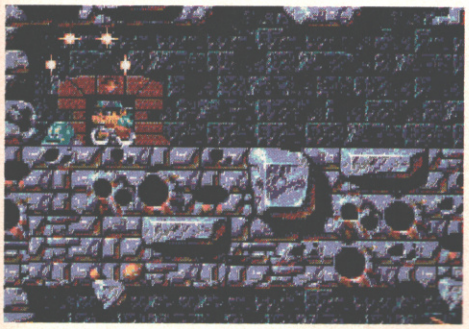
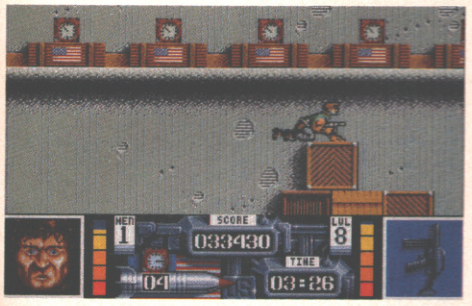




Cure insomnia the platform game way with *Magic Pockets* (above) and the almost-as-snoozy movie game *Navy SEALs*.

the best two-player dinosaur-based platform game where you kill enemies by capturing them in bubbles and bursting them the Amiga's ever seen. We've said '*Bubble Bobble* is a brilliant two-player game but it's not so much fun when played solo' so many times that to repeat it here would be a criminal waste of space, so we'll just take it as read and move onto the sequel. ***Rainbow Islands*** is the best Amiga game of all-time. And, er, that's that. If you don't know the reasons why by now, you haven't been paying attention properly. Go out and buy *The Rainbow Collection* (just £19.99 on the Addicted To Fun label, and featuring both these games as well as the AMIGA POWER All-Time No.19, gorgeous surrealist cute platform adventure ***The New Zealand Story***, bargain fans) and find out what you've been missing.

NOT ALL IT'S QUACKED UP TO BE

In fact, *Rainbow Islands* is such an utterly brilliant game that at the tail end of 1990, Impulze thought they might as well have a go at cloning it. ***Edd The Duck*** looked like its illustrious predecessor, but in gameplay terms it just wasn't in the same league. To be honest, we're not even sure it was playing the same sport. We'd call it a very poor man's *Rainbow Islands*, except that it's not fair to inflict this kind of guff on very poor people, who've got quite enough problems without having to put up with totally crap rip-offs too. So, *Edd* is an incredibly rich man's version of *Rainbow Islands*, for those who can afford to throw their money away.

YOU'LL LIKE THIS...BUT NOT A LOT

And on that subject... You'd have to be pretty bloody well off not to mind being relieved of 25 quid in return for a copy of ***Magic Pockets***. The second release on the Renegade label from top programming emperors the Bitmap Brothers turned out, funnily enough, to be almost exactly the same as the first release on the Renegade label from top programming emperors the Bitmap Brothers. A slow-paced, gloomy-looking, awkward-to-control yawnerama of a lifeless bore, *Magic Pockets* was the game which well and truly burst the Bitmap Brothers Bubble and proved to the world that they really are just as fallible as anyone else. Oh dear. Innovation, inspiration and imagination were just a few of the desirable qualities beginning with the letter 'i' which didn't feature in *Magic Pockets*, and, to be honest, there wasn't much in the way of iconoclasm either.

I'VE ALWAYS GOT THE BLUES

Now if it's iconoclasts you're looking for, surely the kind of chaps you'd be after would be Jake and Elwood, ***The Blues Brothers***. A fine pair of boys, they're the sort of fellows who attack the traditional concept that you can't just simply muck about playing rock'n'roll music and crashing millions of cars for a living, which makes them ideal material for a computer game. (Let's face it, who'd buy *Going To The Office Every Day Simulator*?). That computer game came from Titus, in the shape of an arcade platform fun epic which was so brilliantly playable that we had to hire round-the-clock security to stop Stuart sneaking into the office at 3am every morning to get a few quick games in. Fabulous music, lovely cartoony graphics, immense addictive qualities and a peerless feel for its subject matter made this, for us, the best character licence game ever.

OH NO! MORE LICENSED GAMES

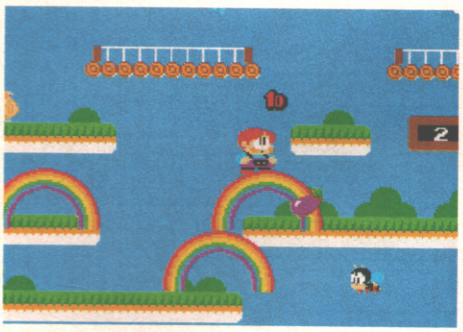
That's 'character licence' as opposed to 'actual film licence', of course. While *The Blues Brothers* wasn't based directly on the film of the same name, there've been no shortage of Amiga platform games which do rely on movies for their plot, characters and sales figures. Most of them have come from Ocean, and most of them have been pretty bloody hopeless, the only recent exception being ***Hudson Hawk***. Visually very similar indeed to the Titus game, *Hudson Hawk* was spoiled to a significant extent by gameplay which owed more to the *Rick Dangerous* school of thinking. Still, it remained a cohesive and playable game, due in no small part to the numerous flashes of humour and character employed by programmers Special FX, which is more than can be said for most of the other movie-based platformers of recent times. ***Darkman***, ***Total Recall*** and ***Navy SEALs*** all relied heavily, if not entirely, on platform antics for the gameplay in their multiple-sub-games makeup, but unfortunately the platform sections were all of the most tedious, unimaginative, repetitive nature imaginable (*Navy SEALs* being the best of a poor bunch), technically perfectly competent but so generic and completely devoid of heart you'd think they were all written with some *Crap Platform Game Construction Kit*.

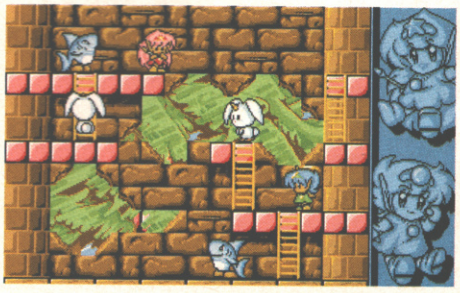
CAPTAIN PLANET, HE'S A HERO?

Mind you, at least that's better than looking like you were written in AMOS, which is the fate of ***Captain Planet***. The insipid Saturday morning cartoon of teenage vigilantes with an environmental consciousness wasn't the most inspiring starting point imaginable, but respected programmer Tony Crowther made such a hash of it that the more cynical amongst us were moved to ponder whether it was actually an act of green sabotage – ie making the game so crap that it wouldn't sell any copies and therefore wouldn't use up any vital natural resources. Whatever, this was such a poor attempt at a platform game – crude graphics, horrible control, just no bloody fun generally – that we can only hope the disks are made out of something non-toxic, so that when copies of the game are ceremonially burnt en masse, it won't affect the ozone layer too badly.

TOUCHED BY THE LAND OF ROD

The dissolving ozone layer isn't something which worries the inhabitants of ***Rodland*** too much – they've got other problems on their minds, such as the kidnapping of fairies Tam and Rit's 'Mom' by a big nasty geezer who looks like a bull. In setting off to rescue her, Tam and Rit inadvertently became the stars of one of the Amiga's finest ever platform games, indeed one of its finest games of any kind. Unfeasibly luscious graphics in bold, dazzling colours depict a no-messing arcade game in the tradition of the ancient *Mr Do* series of coin-ops. Wonderful gameplay in a classic style, but with enough original touches of its own to lift it out of the ordinary and into the realms of the truly special. Unmissable just for the way Tam and Rit bash the baddies to death by swinging them over their heads and smashing them into the ground repeatedly in best Tom And Jerry fashion, but utterly fabulous for dozens of other reasons too. Get it or be branded a po-faced trainspotter forever (by us, anyway).





Cute with a capital 'C' (and a capital 'U', a capital 'T' and a capital 'E'), that's *Rainbow Islands* (top) and *Rodland*.

DEFINITION OF Sound

YOU MIGHT AS WELL PUMP

Staying with pure arcade fun brings us to a game which, perhaps predictably, never achieved the success it undoubtedly deserved. Probably underrated by us at 80 percent, the immensely entertaining ***Monster Business*** from Eclipse was a blast from days long gone, when gameplay was everything and size didn't matter. Not that *Monster Business* is particularly small – it'll certainly take you a long time to get through all 45 levels, thanks to the great difficulty curve – but technical considerations were obviously the last things on the programmers' minds when they wrote it, and the result is a game that's so fun to play you wouldn't believe it.

Basically a cross between ancient coin-op *Dig-Dug* and not-so-ancient coin-op *Snow Bros*, *Monster Business* lets you rampage around a classic building-site scenario, despatching evil meanies by pumping them up with an air-pumping gun until they float helplessly away, then jumping into them and sending them flying across the screen to flatten their fellow baddies. Sounds like great fun already, doesn't it? Well, it is. If you've got a friend with an ST, chuck in a tenner each and get a copy of this (it's a dual-format disk, y'see). Just don't get upset that their music is groovier than yours, that's all... →

DEFINITION OF sound

NOW WE'RE SOLID...AS A ROCK

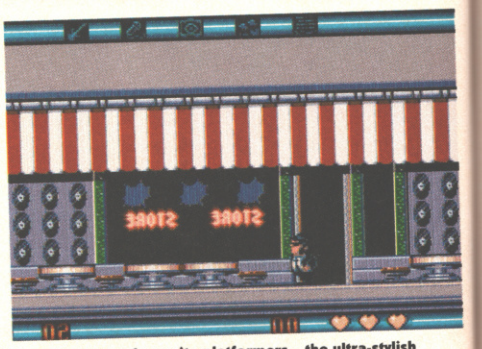
And talking of chucking... (*You're fired -Ed*). One of the first games ever reviewed in AMIGA POWER was also one of the best. Core Design's ***Chuck Rock*** wiped clean the memory of Core's previous platforming efforts (they were the team responsible for the *Rick* games and *Impossamole*) with a game whose only prehistoric aspect was its setting. Gorgeous-looking, funny and playable, Chuck brought the style of The Flintstones and added it to the gameplay of *Super Mario Brothers* (well, sort of), ending up with something which was generic yet unique at the same time. Another must-have platformer.

ROUND 'EM UP, MOVE 'EM OUT

And on and on and on goes the list, and still we've only scratched the surface, really. Within the platform family there are lots of little sub-genres that we haven't gone into in any real depth, like the puzzle-orientated ***PP Hammer And His Pneumatic Weapon***, a decent if never thrilling *Lode Runner* playalike, the adventure-like ***Impossible Mission 2***, where platform-leaping holds equal importance to the solving of various puzzles, discovering and collecting secret codes and mapping your way around a huge complex, or the console-style approach of ***Robocod***, which takes the feel of the MegaDrive legend *Sonic The Hedgehog* and ties it in with *James Pond*, popular hero of an older Amiga arcade game. *Robocod* is a groovy game and no mistake, but it's a long way short of the *Sonic*-beater many critics have made it out to be – there just isn't enough going on in it to back up the beautiful graphics. And then there's ***Flood***, god sim kings Bullfrog's attempt at a cutesy platformer which ties itself up a bit in unnecessary complications, or ***The Killing Game Show*** from Psygnosis, which despite some very *Rainbow Islands*-ish elements is as much a shoot-'em-up as it is a platform game, but suffers from not concentrating on either style properly and unfortunately ends up just a little bit confused. It's still lots of fun to play though.

And finally for now, a couple of games with nothing in common except their platforms and their fabness. Currently at No 40 in the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100 we find Core's ***Car-Vup***, which is perhaps the marshmallow of cute arcade games – all sweetness, no substance. Not that that means it's not great, though – just like marshmallow, it's almost irresistible in small doses. Then, at No12, there's ***Prince Of Persia***. A less-cute game you couldn't hope to find – it's the real odd-man-out amongst the games covered here – but the astounding animation was the equal of any cartoon. It's perhaps not the deepest game in the world either, but for a challenging and demanding arcade adventure of epic proportions, you couldn't ask for better

And that's yer lot – if we've missed out your favourite, why not drop us a line and let everybody know about it? As long as it's not the Bitmaps Brothers' *Gods*, that is. (*What we mean is,* Gods *will instead be covered in a different game category as part of a forthcoming Definition Of Sound buyer's guide. And which category? You'll just have to wait and see... Ed*). ●



Two of our very favourite platformers – the ultra-stylish *Switchblade II* (top) and the impossibly playable *Blues Bros.* Japanese blasting and exploration or cute, Nintendo-ish hi-jinks – take your pick (though, of course, we'd recommend that you get your hands on both).

AN INCREDIBLY LONG LIST OF HALFWAY DECENT AMIGA PLATFORM GAMES...

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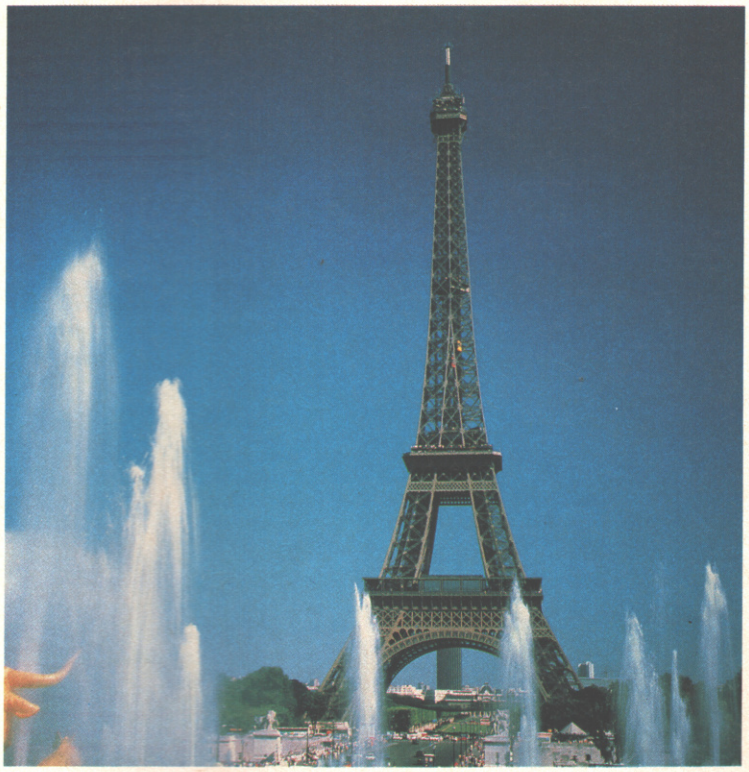
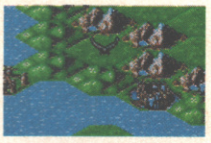
A WEEKEND IN PARIS!

Flushed with an astonishingly praise-filled review of their *Celtic Legends* game (it received 89% in issue nine of AP), those wondrously generous dudes at Ubi Soft have decided to celebrate by sending one lucky AP reader (and a friend) to Paris for a weekend. Now, the link between *Celtic Legends* and the capital of France may seem a bit tenuous – after all, there aren't too many hex-based fights between magicians and golems happening down by the Seine most days of the week – but French is home territory to the Ubi peeps, and that's as good a reason as any to send the lucky winner there.





TELL ME MORE, TELL ME MORE

The happy winner will receive not one, not three, but two (yes, two!) plane tickets and enough spending money to keep him or her in garlic and baguettes for weeks. But – hey! – even if you aren't lucky enough to win the trip to Paris, there's still a shot at one of the five runners-up copies of *Celtic Legends*, the highest-rated strategy-fantasy game ever in AMIGA POWER!

THE QUESTIONS OF YOU

Okay, so this is the hard bit. All we want you to do is to to answer these very simple Celtic questions.

1. Which Irish hero ended a misadventure with a sheep's fleece attached to his back for the rest of his life?
2. What does Tir Nan Og actually mean?
3. Which were the five main lands associated with the Celts?

There, that wasn't too painful, was it? Now simply write the answers down on the back of a postcard or sealed envelopes (any entries inside envelopes will be used for bin target practice). Then simply send your entries to 'The Magic of Paris', 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW. Good luck!

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Celtic warlords, and employees of Future Publishing and Ubi Soft aren't allowed to enter.
- The editor's decision is final, and is not subject to bribes of any kind.
- The closing date for the competition is the 30th of March.

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DO THE write THING

This month in the Amiga world's most opinionated letter column: sarcasm, doubts about our honesty, games of the last year, the lack of reality in computer games, a knighthood for Geoff Crammond(!) and – oh no! – Stuart N Hardy! This is the last you'll read about Stuart in these pages for a little while, so Hardy fans can't afford to miss it!

● **Address your letters to AMIGA POWER, Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath Avon, BA1 2BW**

Dear Matt,

Listen, after reading the latest edition of AMIGA POWER, I came up with a scheme to rake in a fair amount of money! Yes, it's true – I reckon that I can become a millionaire in a matter of years, and it's all down to you and your team. Interested? (*You bet -Ed*). Read on.

I think that AP is overall the best Amiga magazine on any newsagent's shelves that I can reach without standing on tip-toes. With this in mind I intend to emulate the very things that make your magazine great and publish them myself under a different name. Six page reviews? No problem! What I'll do is cleverly write a crappy review, chuck in a few general quotes like 'the graphics aren't pretty but function well' (to make people think I've actually played the thing), and pad out the other five and a half pages with big screenshots! (*Don't forget to use maps of the globe ripped out of encyclopedias, big photographs of aeroplanes and that kind of thing, too -Ed*). Easy! I could perhaps stick on the front page 'NEW FORMAT' or something to that effect, together with an EXCLUSIVE REVIEW which I could just make up, or cobble together quickly from a demo! Who'd notice? Nobody, that's who – it'd be like printing money!

That 'Bottom Line' thing you do is an excellent idea and one which I fully intend to copy, perhaps by printing the pages in red (*Or blue, maybe -Ed*) and calling it 'The Red Pages'. I could also include a really condescending article, perhaps called 'Everything You Wanted To Know About Something Really Obvious', which would interest no-one but would seem as if I was trying to educate newcomers to the world of computing – brilliant! (*Doddle to write, too – just regurgitate a few pages of the manual in comprehensible language -Ed*).

If money was getting a bit tight or sales started to flag I'd include a competition somewhere in between the adverts offering a really groovy prize, with a simple question that even a joystick could answer and – here's the excellent bit – instead of merely sending off the answer, the punters could ring, yes ring, the answer in on one of those money-burning 0898 numbers. That way I could make five times the prize value just by leaving an answering machine with a 10-minute message!!! I'm sorry, but I'm getting a little excited here – it's all too easy! News, tips, interviews – I'll just copy yours and re-publish them (*remember to cut off the last couple of lines of each item, though -Ed*), or if I got really desperate I could even publish used Stuart N Hardy (*Zzzz -Ed*) letters!

So then, what do you think? Brilliant, eh? What do you mean, 'There's already about four magazines like that in circulation'? Sod it, I'll have to come up with something else then.

Thanks for listening,
Simon Byron, Bournemouth

Hey, Simon, they do say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery... -Ed.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Recently I have declared myself Emperor Of The United States Of America, sworn to steer my country back into the British Empire and reduce the price of Commodore Amiga games and hardware by 80 percent all over the world. I hope I can count on the readers of your fine publication to support my bid for control of the most powerful country in the world.

Yours majestically,
Chris Denton, Redhill

Next!

Dear AP,

I am writing in extreme annoyance about Stuart Campbell's review of *Rick Dangerous* (issue nine). His review of *Switchblade* was pathetic as well (*I should think so, they're practically the same game -Ed*). Anyway, to the point. How can he say that Rick is 'dull, boring and repetitive' is beyond me (*It's easy.* Rick Dangerous *is dull, boring and repetitive. See, I've done it again -Stuart*). True, it may be 8-bitish, but the gameplay and sound effects more than make up for this. There aren't that many decent platformers on the Amiga, but *Rick 1* (and *2* for that matter) are good. He probably slags it off because he can't escape the boulder on level 1! (*Ooh, you bitch -Stuart*).

Also the Top 100 games, was this meant to be a joke or what? *Rainbow Islands* isn't (*Snip! -Ed*).

On to Stuart N Hardy (*Snip! -Ed*). Overall the magazine is pretty cool, so I'll sign off now.

Yours,
Patrick Hurley
Chesterfield

PS *Kick Off 2* is ace, so (*Snip! -Ed*).

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Having read the letters pages in issue nine, a J Lewis from Barnet wrote to you about *Midwinter II* – why it was reviewed in one mag in April and yours in October. I take your point that you should only review games that are due out when you review them and I'll quote you 'We don't think it's fair to you, our readers, to review anything other than the exact same product that you're going to buy in the shops, so we wait until a game's completely finished before we cover it.' So could you tell us readers why you reviewed MicroProse's *Formula One Grand Prix* way back in issue seven? Did you review an 'early, nowhere near complete preview'?

Yours not-knowing-to-believe-you,
JC Perry, Chellaston

No, we didn't. We review a game when it's finished, but that doesn't necessarily mean – for reasons which are nothing to do with us – that it's going to appear in the shops at that time. Any number of delays to do with packaging, duplication, or marketing strategy (such as holding a game back for the Christmas rush, for example) can result in a review being out well before you can actually buy the game. We try to avoid the situation as much as possible, but sometimes it just can't be helped -Ed.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I'm an amateur prat, but every now and then I like to sit back and listen to a real pro. Stuart N Hardy! (*Zzzz -Ed*). Whoo! What a guy! (incidentally, what does the 'N' stand for?) But soft! Does this man/lop not have a point? Yes indeed he does! To really stand a chance of getting a letter published you MUST start a really smart argument by:

(a) being really pompous/opinionated and irritating some other pompous/opinionated or PERFECTLY NORMAL person

(b) saying that Amigas are better than STs because they have 183 blitter NormanGaryquiteoverweightJohns, large-bonedBrendas, Fat Agnuses

OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS winner

Dear AMIGA POWER,

With the development of *Lemmings 2* in progress, how about a list of members of the Lemming family that could be implemented to hinder your progress through the new levels?

• HALIFAX LEMMING – waits until all your lemmings reach the exit, then repossesses it and changes the locks.

• MAGGIE LEMMING – barges through the level refusing to 'do a U-turn' even when she hits an obstacle.

• MAJOR LEMMING – follows Maggie Lemming, copying her every move, before dithering back and forwards getting in the way.

• GORBY LEMMING – tries to 'Nuke' your lemmings when you decide you can't complete the level, but...

• BORIS LEMMING – steals the 'Nuke 'Em' icon and won't give it back.

• SCARGILL LEMMING – digs down vertically and diagonally at crucial moments and leads all your lemmings down the tunnels, insisting that they are 'economically viable'.

• SENATOR EDWARD LEMMING – every time you build a bridge he drives across it in his car, knocking your lemmings into the water and drowning them.

• MAXWELL LEMMING – ignores obstacles, bridges and blockers and stumbles straight into the nearest pool of water.

And finally, STUART N LEMMING (*Zzzz -Ed*) – insists on covering any walls he finds in graffiti. All your lemmings stop to read it and die of boredom before they reach the exit.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen Richardson, Whitley Bay

Yeah! And what about Bush Lemming, who appears perfectly normal, but every now and again falls over for no apparent reason and then can't move for 24 hours? Or the previously-little-known Canadian singer Bryan Lemming, who climbs straight to the highest point of the screen and then won't come down for four months? Anyone got any better ideas? Drop us a line to 'Can't Take No More' at the usual AMIGA POWER address, and we'll come up with a prize or two for the best ones -Ed.

DO THE write THING

and relativelyenormousAlans.

So therefore I conclude:
My computer has a 'BigforitsageAlfred' chip and a 1.3 jigowot Fatbastid ROM drive with optional red light that goes PING! and so is better than yours because you live in a council house, your mum is on the game, your dad smells funny and can't always make it to the toilet in time and anyway he's a workshy unemployed layabout who just DOESN'T WANT TO WORK!

So there it is. You've been told now, and I get my letter printed.
No problem.
Yours,
Joe Saunders, Bungay.

Does anyone have any serious letters this month? -Ed.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Recently the letters pages have been full of complaints about certain aspects of the software industry. Now this isn't a bad thing, as it shows ELSPA that they're wrong, and I myself am guilty of writing to complain about them. But it seems that nobody wants to write about anything new. Every letters page is full of complaints about ELSPA, Stuart N Hardy (*Zzzz -Ed*) or how expensive games are nowadays

But this isn't a letter complaining about things and saying that they should be different and then not doing anything.

The one problem that your magazine has is that none of the games parallel the bitterness and emptiness of life. Take *Monkey Island*, for instance. It may seem like a jolly romp about some guy (*Ho ho - Bob Monkhouse*) wanting to become a pirate. But it's not. It's a bitter study of human patheticness. It shows how shallow and weak existence really is, and states that the only solution is to find true love. Before Guy fell in love he was a bit crap. Once he was in love, life worked out for him. But love does not bring happiness. This is a myth that the programmers are trying to make you believe in, so they can get more money from sales of the game.

Don't believe it! Love brings you pain. It brings you large bloodied wounds. The basts who wrote *Monkey Island* are just exploiting the loneliness of existence without coming up with a solution. In real life you cannot just find a woman, save her from a dead ghost and be happy ever after. (*He's right – I've tried so many times, without success -Ed*). In real life you have to work to find true love, then half the time it still doesn't work out. I only hope that in *Monkey Island 2*, Guy has to find the girl he thinks he loves and be rejected by her. Games players should be forced to look upon real life once in a while.

NEXT MONTH: I reveal the horrifying truth about *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* – life isn't just about a green table and some balls.
Yours sincerely,
Alex Finch, Reigate.

An agony aunt writes – I know how you feel, Alex, but try to forget about her. There are lots more girls out there all just dying to meet an attractive, witty chap like yourself. I just hope my daughter isn't one of them.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I'd like to suggestion about your coming Top 100 update. Rather than just giving each game a number, give a percentage mark as well. Of course, this means that No.1 rates highest, with the mark going down as the number goes up. This would be helpful in letting us know how good the lower-rated games are. It is obvious that you think the top 10 are great, but it is not so obvious what you think of the lower positions. In the original Top 100 some of the lower rated games got fairly bad marks in The Bottom Line, which suggests that simply being in the Top 100 doesn't necessarily mean a game is good. A simple percentage would clear any confusion and make the whole thing more accessible. This mark shouldn't necessarily be the same as your original mark, and should be based on all your opinions. After playing a game for a while opinions change, as we saw in issue nine. In the original *Exile* review Matt gave a mark of 80 percent in his On The Other Hand... box, which is good but not that good. Now, eight months later, it appears in his top eight games of the year.

Another reason for the mark to be reconsidered is demonstrated with *Populous 2*. The original mark was 93 percent, your highest ever, and you said it would be in the top five. However, from the opinions of the reviewers in issue nine, 14 games from this year alone were more popular, with only Matt Bielby having it in his top eight. (*Actually, at the time of writing the article, the game had just arrived and no-one else had had time to play it, which might explain things -Ed*). So, I think you should give a mark based on all of your opinions, which would be slightly more objective than your usual reviews.

One more thing: please, please, please don't let *Rainbow Islands* get near the No.1 position. It's a reasonable game, but it didn't deserve to be even in the top 30 in the original top 100. Now, with lots of wonderful new games that have come out since then, I don't think it should make the top 50 (*Well, we do, so tough -Ed*). I don't know anyone who agreed with your original placing of it (*We don't care. It's our chart -Ed*), and from some of the letters printed in your illustrious pages I am sure that a lot of people agree with me. I do like cute platform games on the whole, I think *Robocod* is wonderful and *Rodland* is also good. Both of these are much better than *Rainbow Islands* and many, many non-platform games are better still. (*No they're not -Ed*). I beg you to listen to my plea and to give some deserving games the high positions.
Yours sincerely,
Paul Segal, London

PS Could I please have a copy of *Exile* for my trouble? Pretty please?

Not after being so mean about Rainbow Islands, *no -Ed.*

Dear AMIGA POWER,

In your 'Our Brilliant Year' feature in issue nine, I want to know why Gary Penn said 'Phew! What a stinky year that was'. Now I don't think that suggests it was a brilliant year. And comments from Jonathan ('There've been only a few games good enough to drag me away from my short-wave radio set this year') and Stuart ('For me, maybe 25 of the 300+ games we've reviewed have been even moderately endearing, and of those only about half have been lastingly enjoyable'), don't either. (*No, we meant it was a brilliant year for AMIGA POWER, not for Amiga games generally -Ed*). But the best two things are that your so-called No.1 in your Top 100, *Rainbow Islands*, didn't get one vote and neither did *Mega Traveller 1*. (*That's probably because* Rainbow Islands *wasn't actually released last year -Ed*). Those are the best things that could have happened.
Yours,
Andrew Weir, Ellon.

What about world peace? An end to poverty? Flares coming back again? Get some perspective -Ed.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Let me start by telling you that there isn't a magazine like this one printed here in the United States. (*Hey, how's that new Emperor of yours coming along? -Ed*). I've been longing for a truthful and quite funny (*Shucks -Ed*) game reviews mag. Most of the magazines out here just talk about hardware (yawn!). This is fine, but their game review sections are about five pages long. Anyways, keep up the good work!

I have two questions. One is 'Isn't the word 'CRAP' offensive in Europe?' Here in the States they would never use that word to describe a game or anything else in a review. I guess our equivalent would be to say 'This game is a piece of (*sorry, we can't use that word -Ed*). The second question is how do I go about getting a subscription to your magazine? Here in the States it costs me $7.95 at newsstands.
Thanks,
Michael Reilly, Los Angeles

PS I find some of your English humour quite comical!

Well, Michael, over here 'crap' isn't nearly as offensive as that word you used, so I guess it's just a question of different tastes. As for subscriptions, (and this is also for several readers who wrote to us from Australia and New Zealand this month) it couldn't be easier – simply use the form which we've been including for quite a few months now, which is valid for subs anywhere in the world. For the USA (or anywhere in the world outside of Europe) it'll cost you £76.75, which is quite a lot but it ensures speedy and safe delivery of your issues by Air Mail.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Firstly I think something should be done to stop software houses producing crap games cashing in on a film's success (ie *Turtles, Terminator 2* etc). Film licences should be given to software houses with a good record on film licences (*Such as? -Ed*)

Secondly, I think that Geoff Crammond should be knighted for what appears to be a work of art in the form of *Formula One Grand Prix.*
Yours,
Jasper Searle, London

Fair enough. From now on Mr Crammond will always be referred to in these pages as Sir Geoffrey -Ed

Dear AMIGA POWER,

On Wednesday 18th December I was browsing through the computer mags in my local WH Smith and I noticed your January issue on sale a day early. However, when I got to the counter I was charged £3.65. Why? I admit you had two disks (with great games on them), but your sister mag Amiga Format (which I don't read) had two disks, 308 pages and a 32 page supplement, for no rise in price. Oh, and by the way, when are you going to review *Parasol Stars*? (*Around Easter, when Ocean get around to actually releasing it -Ed*).
Yours,
Steven Balls, West Wickham

Firstly, Amiga Format only actually had about 15 pages more than we did of editorial – the rest were all adverts, which readers always say they hate when we have surveys. Secondly, the 'supplement'

AND ANOTHER THING...

• Stephen Garrett of Dunedin in New Zealand is so desperate for a cheat for *Xenon* that he sent us a 1969 Scottish £1 note to pay for a stamp to send him one. Stuart says thanks a lot for the quid (*It might not be legal tender but it brought a lump to my throat -Stuart*), but we're going to have to disappoint you, Stephen – there is no cheat for *Xenon*.

• N Emmett of Leeds wants to know why some joysticks cost £28 when most are only about £14 or so. We don't know, 'N', but our tip is don't bother with the expensive ones – what you want is a Bug. (They're our faves, and only £14.99 or so). Actually, if you don't mind waiting we'll be doing the inevitable complete joystick review in an up-coming issue.

• David Hunt of Doncaster says 'How about a bit of colour in the mag?' Eh? Unlike most other mags, we don't have a single monochrome page! Still, hope you liked Stuart N Hardy's letter above.

• And the aforementioned Mr D Twigg would like us to send him a copy of 'Pen Pal'. Well, we would, but we haven't got the foggiest idea what it is, so we can't. Life can be a real bitch, eh?

DO THE write THING

was actually a guide to using the two disks on the cover. Thirdly, that issue of AF cost £3.95, which is actually a rise in price of about 32 percent. Don't give up the day job, Steven.

Dear Sir,

The first thing I look at in your excellent magazine is your hilarious letters page. Why can't some of your readers be more tolerant of other people's opinions? Every month there are letters condemning someone who has had the nerve to give such-and-such a game a rating which is too high, too low, or the wrong kind of review altogether. What people should realise is that if we all had the same taste in computer software there would be little advance in any software titles. Everyone thought that golf simulations had come to the end with the release of *PGA Tour*, but now with *MicroProse Golf* we have (in my opinion) a competitor to be taken seriously (I have both, and at the moment MicroProse wins, but I'll probably change my opinion tomorrow).

My own tastes in software include these two, *Jimmy White's Snooker, Railroad Tycoon, Silent Service II, Wings, Thunderhawk, Prince Of Persia* and most RPGs. I don't expect anyone reading this to agree with all these choices but DOES IT MATTER? NO! I look forward to more comedy in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,
Andy Goodall, Edinburgh

Dear Sir,

Following the recent (ongoing) correspondence concerning the packaging of games, here are a few points that I think may widen the debate.

1)Why not have an 'industry standard' disk box? A 3.25 inch disk is pretty standard, so why not the packaging? Let's face it – most other things come packaged in a standard way, be they cassettes, CDs, videos or baked beans.

2) If games were packaged the same it would make them easier to store and they'd look better on your shelf.

3) Why not do away with fancy packaging altogether – losing it would surely bring down the cost of a game.

4) Standard packaging – maybe a CD-type box for full price and the good old cardboard box for budget games – could also help the economy!! Once we've got a standard disk box someone else could start selling the storage system to hold them. It could make them a million!

Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully,
Martin Richter, Hastings, East Sussex

Hmm, interesting but two points. Do books, say, come in standardised sizes (no) and how could you fit a MicroProse-style manual into a CD box? Let's hear from others readers about this.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Recently there have been lots of people writing in going on about how they hate games such as *Gods* and *Kick Off 2* etc, and how they love games such as *Red Heat*!!! What's wrong with these people, do they suffer from some disease with which they can't tell the difference between a quality game and a crap one? Is it just because Stuart Campbell hates *Kick Off 2*, everyone else does? There's no need to lick up to staff to get your letter printed (*It helps, though -Gary*). I bet if Stuart Campbell said 'I hate *The Secret Of Monkey Island*' you would receive thousands of letters from people who hate the game too. (*Let's see, shall we? 'I hate* The Secret Of Monkey Island*'. Stand by, postmen everywhere... -Stuart*). It's just as bad as 'I bet you won't print this letter'. I know it's hardly a thing to complain about but I believe my point should be made.

Yours,
David Shattu, Chiswick

And now, finally, once and for all, the end of the Stuart N Hardy 'debate.' Our mailbag is in severe danger of becoming the Stuart N Hardy Hate Column, so to make space for some more interesting topics, we print the last words which are going to be printed in AMIGA POWER on the subject of the boy from Sheffield and his, er, controversial missives. All angles are covered, including the right of reply, so let's hear no more about it, eh?

Dear AP,

I thought that as one of Stuart N (I was unaware that 'Knob' began with an 'N') Hardy's relatives had joined the fray I may as well too, as something is mystifying both myself and my husband, Paul. We've spent a good deal of time (well, 10 minutes or so) trying to calculate what the odds were for Mr and Mrs Hardy Major producing not one but two monumentally dim sons but gave up in the low millions? Maybe you can help?

Yours sincerely,
Amanda Connolly, Brighton

PS Is there a high incidence of inbreeding in Sheffield?

Next!

Dear Ed,

I feel I have to come to the defence of Stuart N Hardy. His letters are no worse than many others that get printed, but I do have some advice to offer. He should write each letter in a different style and under a different name. That way he can write as many letters as he likes, no-one knows they're from him and everybody's happy!

Yours truly,
Chiang Kai Sek, London

Next!

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I couldn't drop you a line without joining the 'Let's give Stuart Hardy some stick club', so here goes. Last issue (January) you asked his twin brother Paul how old they were. I can tell you the exact age – 21. In dog years. (*Actually, the boy Paul wrote to us this month revealing that the Hardy boys were 20 last autumn. Surprised us... -Ed*). Stuart – lighten up. Stuart's mother – slap your sons.

Seriously now readers, the reason Stuart's letters get printed is because they address topical issues and are well written (*and we like the way he uses four different colours of ink to highlight important words every time, too -Ed*). Also, his style gets right up people's noses, and we all love to hate him (or just hate him). I personally flick through the letters pages looking for a letter from the sons of Oliver Hardy and read it first. Magazines have realised this and that's another reason why his letters have been printed. If you really want him to go away just ignore what he has to say. Personally I don't, and I think the 'Sons Of Oliver Hardy Corner' should become a regular feature of AMIGA POWER.

TTFN,
Mr D Twigg, Dingle

Now, the man himself. As a special treat for you all, we've decided to print you a letter as we receive them just this once, right down to the colours...

Dear AMIGA POWER,

So I've upset 112 of your readers, have I? Well, considering you are 'Britain's Best-Selling Amiga Games Magazine' and only this mere number have written in with complaints (*About 50 percent of our entire monthly mailbag, as it happens -Ed*), I can only assume that the rest of your readers either enjoy my letters or don't really care one way or the other.

Out of those 112, my brother did a good job of shooting Paul Connolly down in flames (*Matter of opinion -Ed*), so that only leaves 111. As for Chris Steurland's complaint last issue, he is wrong in stating that I have two letters printed in every mag because I don't even write to all of them! If he finds my letters 'Rubbish' and 'Boring' then he obviously doesn't know good literature when he sees it (*Splutter -Melvyn Bragg*). Instead of moaning though, why doesn't he just miss my scribblings and enjoy the rest of the column? Chris seems to take the 'I hate Stuart's letters so don't print them' attitude. How pathetic. If he dislikes a novel, does he write to the publishers telling them not to print any more by that particular author? I hope not!

The previous issue had Greg Brown stating exact opposite views and saying how my letters have 'What insight'. He needn't worry, though, as I will continue to send my letters in to selected magazines – but perhaps not in the same volume as before...

As for the other 110 alleged (*What do you, mean, 'alleged'? Do you want us to send them to you? -Ed*) complaints, though, I cannot defend myself because I haven't even seen them. But I will tell these readers this: England is a free country which allows freedom of speech. I am just as entitled to voice my opinions as the next person. If mine are usually published and theirs aren't then that's just too bad – perhaps they should submit unique and interesting letters to the mags for a change.

Now for a question. If magazines such as yours do not find my letters important, why do you continually use up precious space publishing them? Your honest views would be appreciated. Anyway, I've said enough for now. Please keep up the good work with AMIGA POWER and here's to 1992!

Yours sincerely,
Stuart N Hardy, Sheffield

And finally...

Dear Sir,

Ohmygod another one! Could you PLEASE tell me which cosmic power blundered so unforgivably as to allow the existence of another Hardy! One was bad enough, but two... It's the most convincing argument any atheist could possibly offer as to the non-existence of God.

To be sure, the infamous Stuart N is literate. His brother is also literate. Both are intensely dull, too, though and even the most dazzling exhibition of technical accuracy does nothing to mitigate this. The fact which has obviously eluded both Stuart N and Paul A, is that neither of them is qualified to write letters. NO. THEY BLOODY WELL ARE NOT. The hallmark of a good writer is that he/she can produce an essay on the most stupefyingly dreary subject *and make it seem fascinating and/or amusing*. I don't care if the subjects are old and well-chewed, or new and intriguing. I don't care if he writes in the minutest detail about trainspotting or drying paint. I'll read anything, as long as it's engagingly written. Neither Hardy is engaging. Neither is yet competent to write letters. Oh, they both *understand* the structures of the written language, but they have not quite grasped that it takes more than a clinical knowledge to avoid losing that certain something on the way from brain to printed page.

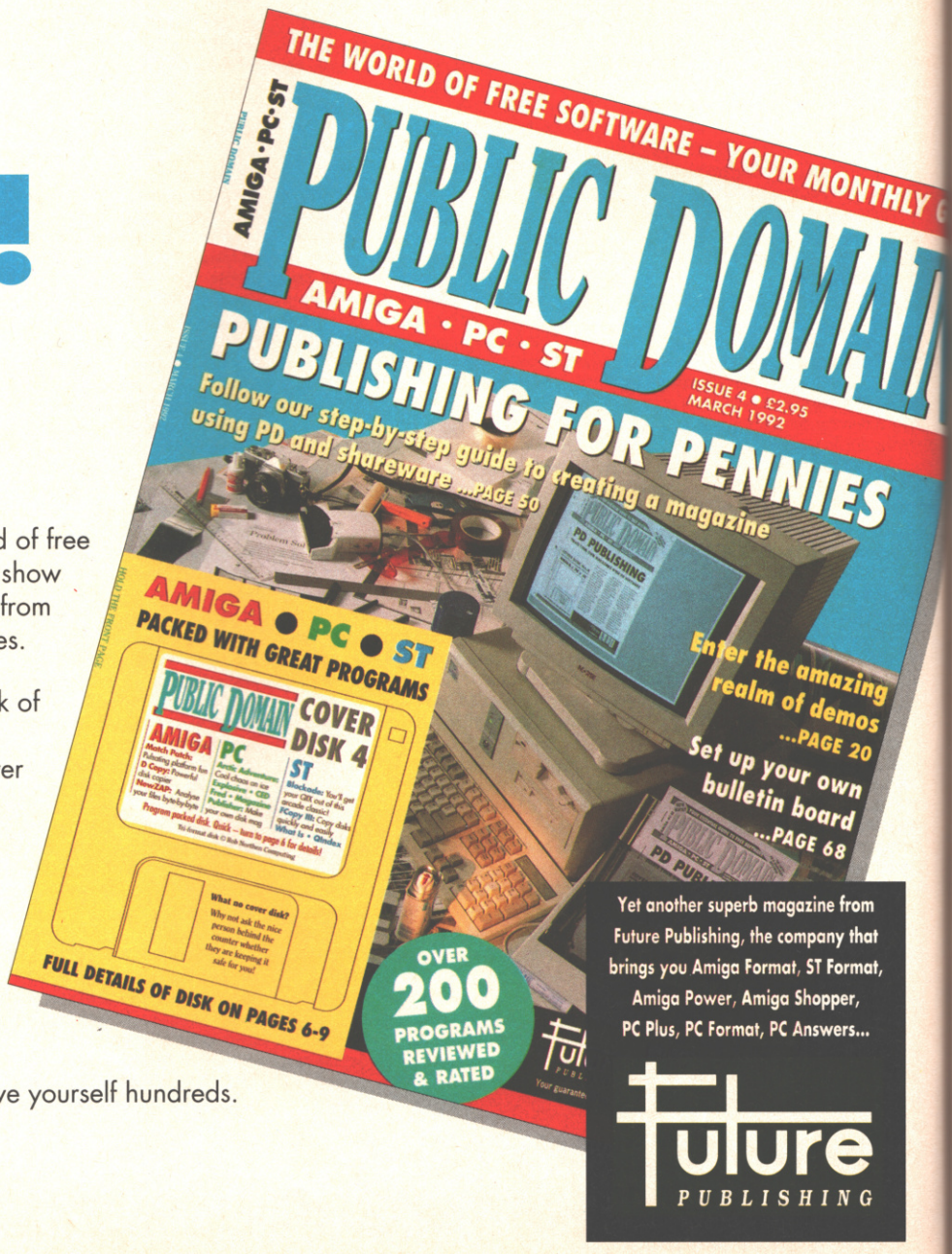
As to Stuart N's much-vaunted award-winning compositions – I will gladly congratulate him when he wins an award from a *literary* publication, and not until then. I suspect that he does not yet have the ability to do more than bag money from magazines whose primary concern is games rather than earthshaking prose.

I wish he *would* move his aims up a notch. For one thing he would learn and, if he did well, would receive *true* accolade. For another, he would vacate his AMIGA POWER soap box so that I no longer have to read the 'intensely dull missives' which I have endured to date in your excellent magazine. I applaud the 112 readers who had the wherewithal to get up on their hind legs and write to you. I am proud to be counted as number 113. Bad luck, Stuart N.

Yours faithfully,
Angus Mackenzie, Brompton-On-Swale

Phew. Strong stuff from Angus, but we wouldn't like anyone to think that you have to be a Pulitzer Prize winner to write to AMIGA POWER. If you've got writing talent, all to the good, but don't worry about it. If you've got a point to make but you can't string three coherent words together, we still want to hear from you – we can always tidy things up a bit for the mag. As for old Stuart, Angus inadvertently puts his finger on it when he applauds the readers who bothered to write in about him – if you don't like the Hardy Bros' letters, write us something better! This is a letters page, we can only print things that people send us! Got something to say? You know the address. ●

WHY PAY FOR SOFTWARE? YOU CAN GET IT FOR FREE!



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Future PUBLISHING

AFRIKA KORPS
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – Intelligent opponents set it apart from the standard wargame. ***Downers*** – But not enough to give it any flair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just because it's a wargame, it doesn't mean it has to be this primitive. ★

AH37-M THUNDERHAWK
Core £30.99

Uppers – The fastest, slickest 3D graphics yet to grace the Amiga. The arcade approach makes things much easier to get to grips with. ***Downers*** – The lack of real sim elements may put some off, and the mouse control is a bit unwieldy. ***The Bottom Line*** – A brilliantly executed arcade-simulation crossover, which captures the frenetic helicopter feel quite excellently. ★★★★★

ALIEN BREED
Team 17 £25.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and atmospheric *Gauntlet* variant, with lots of lovely touches, a two player mode, and a free *Pong* game! ***Downers*** – Only six levels, and it's not the kind of game you're likely to come back to when you've finished it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a bad effort at all from the ex-PD boys, but maybe a little thin to last for long. ★★★★

ALIEN STORM
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – *Golden Axe* given a futuristic sci-fi scenario. ***Downers*** – The elements of playability which made *Golden Axe* so great are missing from this one. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically adept, but sorely lacking in every other respect ★★

ALPHA WAVES
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Nice 3D bouncing romp. Bizarre, but endearing (in a French sort of way). ***Downers*** – It tends to feel like an executive toy, and a very expensive one at that. ***The Bottom Line*** – A novel diversion but no great shakes. ★★

ALTERED DESTINY
Accolade £29.99

Uppers – An absorbing adventure in true American style. ***Downers*** – It's not really anything new, and it sure isn't up to Lucasfilm standards. ***The Bottom Line*** – You could do worse, but you could certainly do better. ★★★

AMIGA ENCOUNTER
Novagen £20.42

Uppers – Very fast and atmospheric. ***Downers*** – It's just *Battlezone* yet again. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good old-fashioned zooming 'n' blasting fun, but it really should have been a budget game. ★★★

AMNIOS
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Another old Williams arcade classic gets dusted down and re-interpreted (this time it's *Sinistar*). ***Downers*** – It's already been done better (if not as lavishly) by the under-rated *Photon Storm*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good for an occasional blast. ★★★

ANOTHER WORLD
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – Near perfect graphics and some truly breathtaking setpieces. ***Downers*** – The frustration level rises to health-risk level at times. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a true classic, but destined to become a landmark. ★★★★★

ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Lots of tanks, lots of planes, lots of places to go. It's deep and wide and tall. ***Downers*** – Takes a lot of self-discipline to play properly. ***The Bottom Line*** – A natural successor to *Carrier Command*. ★★★★

ARMALYTE
Thalamus £25.99

Uppers – Enjoyable in an old-fashioned sort of way. ***Downers*** – Sloppy presentation and inadequate design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Totally eclipsed by Activision's *R-Type II*. ★★

ARNHEM
CCS £19.95

Uppers – A 8-bit classic wargame finally brought to Amiga owners. ***Downers*** – ...but nobody really wanted it anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Primitive beyond belief – even wargamers should give it a wide berth. ★

A-10 TANK KILLER
Dynamix (Sierra) £35.75

Uppers – A wealth of typical flight sim-style detail. ***Downers*** – Gameplay suffers due to the sluggish frame rate and lack of a real flying 'feel'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A interesting but flawed attempt at taking the flight simulation genre a stage further. ★★★

ATOMINO
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Easy to pick up, with thousands of levels to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Can covalent bonding be fun? We're not sure. Rather samey; very tough; crap music. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slightly similar to *Pipe Mania* in some ways – if you liked that, then try this one for size. ★★★

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Variety, neat animation, some decent jokes. ***Downers*** – But film licences nearly always feel too thin to be worth 25 quid... ***The Bottom Line*** – ...and this one's no different. Fun but slight.★★★

BABY JO
Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Sweet *Mario*-influenced game with barrels of cuteness and lots of simple fun. ***Downers*** –

Death by full nappy – yeuch! ***The Bottom Line*** – Lovable and entertaining, if technically a bit on the crap side. Overpriced for what it is, though. ★★

BADLANDS
Tengen (Domark) £19.99

Uppers – A close conversion... ***Downers*** – ...of a crap overhead-view arcade race game. ***The Bottom Line*** – So workmanlike its jeans hang over its arse. ★★

THE BALL GAME
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Based on the excellent but un-released *Infection* puzzle game. ***Downers*** – The concept is spoiled by senseless changes to the rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – Interesting, but ineptly executed. ★★

BARBARIAN 2
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – It looks good and there's a generous measure of senseless brutality and fantasy atmosphere. ***Downers*** – Very repetitive and very shallow in the gameplay stakes. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Shadow Of The Beast* fans will love it. ★★★

BATTLE CHESS II – CHINESE CHESS
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Cute graphics, and a new angle on the chess theme. ***Downers*** – The animations soon become tiresome, and Chinese chess isn't half as interesting as the standard game anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good as a showpiece game, but a failure as a piece of playable software. ★★

BATTLE ISLE
Ubi Soft £29.99

Uppers – Easy to get to grips with.

Looks lovely, and the intro sequence is even funny. ***Downers*** – Disk access at every turn and combat which seems to be random are a pain. ***The Bottom Line*** – An enormously promising and brave idea which hasn't quite come off successfully. ★★★★

BEAST BUSTERS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Graphically close to the original arcade version. ***Downers*** – Tends to slow down when there's a lot happening on screen, and it's far too easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't really compare too well with all the other *Op Wolf* games on the Amiga. ★★

BIG BUSINESS
Magic Bytes £25.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and a fairly original concept. Would you believe, a 'humorous business simulation'? ***Downers*** – It's true, though the humour is feeble-witted stereotyping, and the business part is tedious number-crunching. ***The Bottom Line*** – Some nice touches, but at the end of the day it just isn't any fun to play at all. ★★

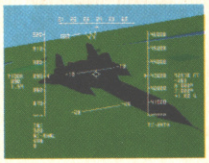
BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
Capstone (Accolade) £24.99

Uppers – In our humble opinion, a most excellent subject for a licence. The game even manages to capture some of the flavour of the bodacious film too. ***Downers*** – But that doesn't stop it being a strong contender for the 'Weakest Gameplay In The World' award. ***The Bottom Line*** – Something of a missed opportunity. Let's hope for better things from the game of the film sequel. ★★

BILLIARDS II SIMULATOR
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Plenty of variations, including a 'crazy pool' with an octagonal table. ***Downers*** – Neither the 2D or 3D modes allow a decent shot to be made, and the 'feel' of the sport is lost completely. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another game which crumbles in the face of its competition, this time in the form of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*. ★★

BIRDS OF PREY
Electronic Arts £34.99



Uppers – Phenomenally comprehensive. A wider choice of aircraft than every flight sim ever put together. ***Downers*** – The screen update is excruciatingly jerky. The controls are as unrealistic as ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most complex flight sim to date. Virtually guaranteed to hold your attention for months. ★★★★

BLADE WARRIOR
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Pretty breathtaking graphics, with plenty of action and puzzling too. ***Downers*** – The gameplay is unlikely to be to everyone's taste. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the most atmospheric game ever. ★★★★

BLUE MAX
Mindscape £34.99

Uppers – Less techie than most flying thangs. Some rather spiffing sound compliments the WWI feel nicely. ***Downers*** – Not a winner in the user-friendliness stakes, and the slow and sloppy main game never (ahem) really takes off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull. *Not* the definitive bi-plane game for Biggles buffs it should have been. ★

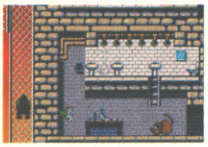
THE BLUES BROTHERS
Titus £25.99

Uppers – So playable its frightening. And it's funny too. ***Downers*** – The two player mode is a wasted opportunity. ***The Bottom Line*** –

After a couple of months of slowly creeping up in size – from six to seven to the current standard of a whopping eight pages! – The Bottom Line finally settles down and stays where it is for a bit. That doesn't mean it isn't packed with fab new games though, oh no. Check out instant greats like *RoboCop 3*, *Another World* and – perhaps surprisingly – *Leander*, then learn reasons to avoid *WWF Wrestlemania*, *The Godfather* and – utterly unsurprisingly – *Space Ace II*. The Bottom Line is Britain's only constantly updated guide to twelve month's worth of full price games – if you're thinking of investing in something new to play, this is the first place to come.

THE BOTTOM LINE

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

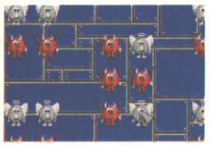


Probably the best character licence ever to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★

BONANZA BROS
US Gold £25.99

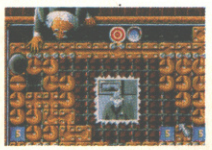
Uppers – An original(ish) theme complemented by a unique and interesting visual approach. ***Downers*** – What's there is a right laugh, but only for a limited 10 scenarios. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stylish, but lacking longevity.★★★★

BOOLY
Loriciels £19.99



Uppers – More novel than the average puzzler, and an interesting blend of logic, tactics and luck. ***Downers*** – Possibly requires too much self-discipline to play properly for most people. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fascinating and moderately entertaining, but it's always going to be a minority-appeal kind of thing. ★★★

BOSTON BOMB CLUB
Silmarils £25.99



Uppers – A neat twist on the sliding block type of puzzle game. ***Downers*** – It hasn't got the longest game life ever, and the basic concept won't exactly light everybody's fire. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the better puzzlers we've seen lately. Pleasing, fun and very French. ★★★★

BRAIN BLASTERS
Ubi Soft £25.99

Uppers – Well, there's a simultaneous two player mode. ***Downers*** – But it's only really remotely playable when played solo. ***The Bottom Line*** – A sad, simplistic and ineffective puzzler. ★

BRAT
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Very pretty, very smooth, very challenging. ***Downers*** – ...and very, very irritating indeed, especially if you hate the central character. ***The Bottom Line*** – Okay if you play it with the sound off. ★★★

BREACH 2
Impressions £24.99

Uppers – Stick with it and you'll find an immensely rewarding space/strategy blast with loads of levels. ***Downers*** – Scrappy graphics and some awkward quirks will deter many. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loved *Laser Squad*? Then you'll probably take a shine to *Breach 2*. ★★

BREACH 2 (ENHANCED)
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – A strategy role-playing game done the old-fashioned (and playable) way. ***Downers*** – It's nothing new and it doesn't exactly look modern. ***The Bottom Line*** – Surprisingly deep and fun. ★★★

BRIGADE COMMANDER
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Desert Storm scenarios give it a nice touch of topicality. ***Downers*** – The usual crap graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Friendlier than the average wargame, and more playable too. ★★★

BUILDERLAND
Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Interesting and cute *Lemmings* derivative. ***Downers*** – It's written in AMOS, and it shows. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but it's a shame they couldn't have hired someone to program it properly. ★★

CADAVER
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeously atmospheric graphics; a good mix of puzzling and hacking. ***Downers*** – One or two irritating moments and it's all a bit lacking in the excitement department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice blend of 3D graphics and adventuring (but it's not a classic). ★★★

CADAVER – THE PAYOFF
Renegade £16.99

Uppers – A wonderful add-on for fans of the first *Cadaver*. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use for anyone else though. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the original, this isn't such a bad price to pay for more of the same. ★★★

CAPTAIN PLANET
Mindscape £25.99

Uppers – Um, it's ideologically sound. And the colours are nice. ***Downers*** – Terminally flawed gameplay, and seems to have been put together in a terrible hurry. ***The Bottom Line*** – No fun to play at all, and that's all that matters in the end. Forget it. ★★

THE CARDINAL OF THE KREMLIN
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably captivating and accessible strategy. ***Downers*** – Ridiculous arcade sequence dropped slap bang in the middle of the game almost totally destroys the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Alarmingly stupid design blows what could have been a winner. ★★

CARDIAXX
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – A shoot-'em-up with the added ingredients of (a lorra, lorra) speed and a score bar right in the middle of the play area. ***Downers*** – Beyond these 'features' there's not really anything special about *Cardiaxx* at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – Its heart's in the right place, but its playability hasn't turned up to the party. ★★

CELTIC LEGENDS
Ubi Soft £30.99

Uppers – Plenty of strategy plus plenty of action plus good presentation make for a more than passable role-playing challenge. ***Downers*** – The ponderous computer opponent won't break any speed records. ***The Bottom Line*** – More than enough brainstorming and hack'n'slay to keep you in jollies for ages. ★★★★★

CENTURION
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Fairly interesting management sections with some nifty battle sequences. ***Downers*** – Two appalling arcade sections blow its chances. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unbalanced. ★★

CHALLENGE GOLF
On-Line £24.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and up to four players catered for. ***Downers*** – Mind-numbingly unrealistic putting sequence, and loads of unnecessary little bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lack of playability makes this a seriously below-par golf sim. Go for *PGA Tour Golf* instead. ★

CHAMPION DRIVER
Idea £25.99

Uppers – An overhead racing game which knows its limitations, and works splendidly within them. ***Downers*** – Less frills than a frill-less thing, and isn't this a high price for this sort of thing? ***The Bottom Line*** – Very fast and slick racer, which lacks longivity. ★★★

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Arcade sequences break up the heavy-duty strategy action. ***Downers*** – Even more ridiculous disk accessing than usual in this type of thing. Crap programming generally. ***The Bottom Line*** – Potentially good game ruined by complete lack of playability. ★

CHAOS IN ANDROMEDA
On-Line £24.99

Uppers – Lots of character interaction and plenty to do. ***Downers*** – Crap fight sequences and tiny graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enjoyable *Ultima*-style adventure slightly spoiled by sloppy programming. Still good fun though. ★★★

CHAOS STRIKES BACK
FTL (Mirrorsoft) £24.99

Uppers – Complex and ingenious puzzles; very user friendly; great sound. ***Downers*** – Slightly old fashioned looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing role playing adventure using the *Dungeon Master* game system. ★★★★

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – Visually impressive wargame, with instant appeal and plenty of user-friendly presentation. ***Downers*** – Things fall down in the wargaming aspect of things, with some rather silly rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very brave try, but it doesn't quite reach the heights to which it aspires. ★★★

CHE: GUERILLA IN BOLIVIA
CCS £25.99

Uppers – The first Che licence we've seen. ***Downers*** – A lethally average wargame. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only undemanding absolute beginners need apply. ★★

CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – A first class caveman romp, with some innovation in the gameplay for once. ***Downers*** – A touch shallow and a touch easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty brilliant platformer, one of the Amiga's very best. ★★★★

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER 2.0
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – A veritable air force of planes to fly, with piles of options, missions and the obligatory load of external views. There's even the opportunity to fly the Space Shuttle. ***Downers*** – A complete lack of speed, bad disk access and naff perspective put a damper on the whole affair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Low flying flight sim – fails to stay with the competition. ★★★

CISCO HEAT
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – A fun driving game, with hills and junctions giving it a bit of originality. ***Downers*** – Not even slightly close to the coin-op, and the control system is abominable. ***The Bottom Line*** – Far too short to provide a decent amount of enjoyment. ★★★

COHORT
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – (Relatively) excellent graphics and helpful user-interface make things accessible. ***Downers*** – The control system isn't as good as it should be. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fine off-beat wargame, but overpriced. ★★

COMMANDO
Elite £19.99

Uppers – Lovingly recreated coin-op blast-'em scroller. The game that launched a thousand scrolling war blasters. ***Downers*** – As fashionable as an anorak. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classic stuff, but not a good indication of the Amiga's capabilities. ★★★

CONFLICT MIDDLE EAST
SSI/US Gold £30.99

Uppers – A wargame in the traditional sense, but executed very well indeed. ***Downers*** – The wargame label is no longer a valid excuse for a program looking so dated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Of limited interest, even to hardened wargamers. ★★★

COUGAR FORCE
Tomahawk £19.99

Uppers – The box is quite interesting (actually that's a bit of a lie). ***Downers*** – Everything. The sound, the graphics, the gameplay – all dire in the extreme. ***The Bottom Line*** – A perfect present for pyromaniacs. ★

COVERT ACTION
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Lots of atmosphere and some excellent sub-games. ***Downers*** – Could have been better programmed, could have had much better controls, and could have been £10 cheaper. ***The Bottom Line*** – Surprisingly playable and enjoyable – with just a little more user-friendliness this would have been an absolute classic. ★★★

CRIME DOES NOT PAY
Titus £25.95

Uppers – Er... reasonable(ish) graphics? ***Downers*** – Terrible gameplay, pathetic humour, atrocious design, useless plot... shall we go on? I think not. ***The Bottom Line*** – Crime doesn't pay. This game is a software crime, so work it out for yourself. ★

CRIME TIME
Starbyte £25.99

Uppers – A German adventure with the added bonus of... graphics! ***Downers*** – But not very good ones, and the rest of the game is a little on the trashy side. ***The Bottom Line*** – A hideously dated, unoriginal adventure. ★

CRIME WAVE
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – Gore galore; the numerous video interludes spice it up a bit. ***Downers*** – The actual game is dull in the extreme, and the waiting between levels is monstrous. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bog-standard blast-'em-up with knobs on. ★

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
Delphine/US Gold £27.99

Uppers – Superbly-designed plot, lovely graphics, and the usual compulsive quality you expect from Delphine. ***Downers*** – Loads (and loads) of disk-accessing, and even when you've got the solution it seemingly takes eight hours to play it through to the end. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not flawless, but still an absolutely lovely game, and a worthy companion to *Monkey Island*. ★★★★★

CYBERCON III
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant sense of 'being there', and better Freescape than Freescape. ***Downers*** – Predictably, not all that accessible to your average game player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Well worth the effort of getting into. ★★★★★

DARKMAN
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – The driving section is imaginative and fun. ***Downers*** – Everything else is hackneyed, licence-by-numbers rubbish. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not quite as bad as *Total Recall* and *Nightbreed*, but not very much better either. The worst film game for quite some time. ★★

DAS BOOT
Mindscape £29.99

Uppers – The most accessible sub sim to date. ***Downers*** – ...but that still doesn't make it particularly accessible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Playable, but overpriced. The best in its field. ★★★

DEATHBRINGER
Empire £25.99

Uppers – Stunning parallax scrolling, plenty of tongue-in-cheek action and a wonderfully camp hero. ***Downers*** – Shallow hack'n'slash gameplay and dodgy collision detection. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a lot of entertainment for a full-price game. ★★★

DEATH KNIGHTS OF KRYNN
SSI / US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A great improvement on the previous 'Krynn' role-players. ***Downers*** – But compared to the mighty *Eye Of The Beholder*, this is very average indeed. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough product, but nothing very spectacular. ★★★

DEUTEROS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – An incredibly huge and absorbing game, with challenges that seem perfectly paced to be in tune with the developing game-skills of the average player. ***Downers*** – Visually it can be a bit of a yawn. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be fooled by the strategy exterior – this is a game that everyone should try. ★★★★★

DINO WARS
Magic Bytes £25.99

Uppers – A novel chess variant, including a great 'two players at once' option where you don't have to wait for the other player to move. ***Downers*** – The central beat-'em-up section is a bit crap, and the game as a whole is over-simplistic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice idea, but asking £25 for it is a bit of a cheek – there just isn't enough to it. ★★

DISC
Loriciel £24.99

Uppers – A few nice graphical touches. ***Downers*** – Appallingly-designed gameplay with very little actual action. ***The Bottom Line*** – A crappy *Discs Of Tron* rip-off without most of the original's good features. ★

DISCOVERY
Micro Illusions £25.99

Uppers – Good graphics for an educational game. ***Downers*** – For a game which relies heavily on speech synthesis, the speech quality is terrible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tricky to play and educationally dubious, this is a bit of a flop. ★★

DOUBLE DRAGON III
Storm £25.99

Uppers – Give us a minute, we'll think of something. ***Downers*** – A very bad example of a very tired genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – The beat-'em-up done just how it shouldn't be. ★

DRAGON FIGHTER
Idea £25.99

Uppers – An unusual mixture of scrolling shoot-'em-up and strategy-ish bits. ***Downers*** – The strategy bits just get in the way, and the arcade bit hasn't been done justice. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slick, but insubstantial. ★★

DRAGONS OF FLAME
SSI (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Almost instant playability – not something you'd expect from a role playing game. ***Downers*** – A bit simplistic for all the real Dungeons & Dragons fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent introduction to the new bread of fantasy RPGs. ★★★

DRAGON'S LAIR II
Readysoft £44.95

Uppers – Really incredibly gorgeous cartoon graphics. ***Downers*** – Minimal player interaction and a ridiculous price tag. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best value game in the world. ★★

ELF
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – An excellent arcade adventure romp, with enough interesting little extras to make it fresh. ***Downers*** – These things are getting just a little bit old-fashioned, aren't they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A good solid game from the Ocean stable, but not a world beater. ★★★★

ELVIRA – THE ARCADE GAME
Flair £25.99

Uppers – A highly polished arcade adventure that's a real joy to play. ***Downers*** – There's no innovation or gameplay surprise here. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fine example of a tried'n'trusted formula. ★★★★

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – A surprisingly involving footy strategy thing in the *Football Manager* vein. ***Downers*** – They're not still making these things are they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A dated idea – it sounds tedious but it's actually executed quite commendably. ★★

EXILE
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Real-world physics incorporated into an arcade game; it's more of a true arcade adventure than most games bearing that tag. ***Downers*** – Rather primitive graphics, and not the most instantly playable game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great arcade adventure, but it might not be your cup of tea if you're an action fan. Voted AMIGA POWER reviewers game of the year! ★★★★★

EXTERMINATOR
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Very original (read 'very, very odd indeed') arcade thing, well converted to retain the original's feel. ***Downers*** – Confusing initially, but once you've played it for a while it's...confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great fun, but it doesn't really make it in the longevity stakes. ★★★

THE EXECUTIONER
Hawk £25.99

Uppers – A playable enough *Thrust*-variant, with one or two extra bits tacked on (such as the tasteful

torture scenes). ***Downers*** – The core of the game just isn't exciting or different enough to give *The Executioner* that 'one more go' appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine if you don't mind the slightly repetitive gameplay, and significant lack of action. ★★

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
SSI (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Takes *Dungeon Master* a step further. Excellent atmosphere and graphics. ***Downers*** – Despite being better than *DM*, it's not as different as it should have been. There's still room for improvement in the D&D genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the best D&D game yet for the Amiga. (Or, indeed, for anything else). ★★★★★

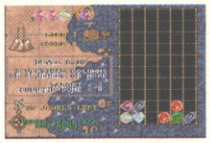
F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Graphics to make you gasp, sound effects to get your adrenalin pumping and gameplay to leave you in a quivering heap on the floor. ***Downers*** – Despite the shoot-'em-up nature of things, it can all be a touch too much for the less ambitious games player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the last word in flight sims (so far, anyway). ★★★★★

FACE OFF
£25.99

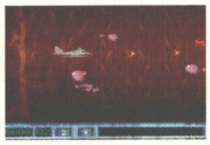
Uppers – Reasonable graphics, some nice attention to detail and fairly realistic player movement. ***Downers*** – Not the game to show just how good ice hockey can be on the Amiga. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very average game, but we've yet to see any other better ice hockey efforts. ★★

FALLING JEWELS
Soft & Easy £25.99



Uppers – A nice variation on the *Klax* and *Tetris* themes. ***Downers*** – Awful exterior. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd not be badly advised to take a tumble with *Falling Jewels*. ★★★

FANTASTIC VOYAGE
Centaur £25.99



Uppers – A simple, methodical shoot-'em-up with highly atmospheric graphics. ***Downers*** – Not very hectic, and not surprising in the least. ***The Bottom Line*** – Deserves to do well. ★★★

FATE – GATES OF DAWN
Rainbow Arts £29.99

Uppers – 'Unbelievably horny women', unusual presentation and more to do than some so-called RPG games. ***Downers*** – Fiddly control and tatty presentation. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just another FRPG really, but with enough character to make it worthwhile. Far from essential though. ★★★

FINAL BLOW
Storm £25.99

Uppers – A pretty close conversion of the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Which was an absolute duffer in the first place. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best boxing game around (and just look at the competition!). ★

FINAL FIGHT
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – Context-sensitive controls, huge sprites, arcade-true graphics, generally an excellent conversion. ***Downers*** – Then again it's a conversion of a fairly dull, and quite dated, formulaic coin-op. And the beat-'em-up is looking a little long in the tooth these days. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically impressive and loads of fun to play, this might even knock the famous *IK+* off its 'best Amiga beat-'em-up' perch. (But then again it might not). ★★★★

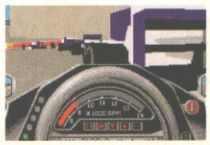
FIRST SAMURAI
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Stunningly well-programmed, imaginative design and inspired use of sound, all added to a classic and proven gameplay style. ***Downers*** – Maybe just a little on the slow side. ***The Bottom Line*** – Simply gorgeous arcade adventure that you really shouldn't be without. ★★★★★

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II
D&H £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably complex and wide-ranging strategy bash. ***Downers*** – £25 for a footie management game? Get real. ***The Bottom Line*** – Adds nothing new to the decades-old number-crunching of every other football manager game ever. ★★

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Breathtakingly detailed 3D and the finest driving feel yet seen on the Amiga. ***Downers*** – The prospect of such an accurate Grand Prix simulation isn't going to appeal to everyone. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best racing game we've ever seen, and probably the best game to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★★

4D SPORTS BOXING
Mindscape £25.99

Uppers – The best boxing game yet, with some highly original polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Slower than you could possibly imagine, with an over-complex control system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unusual, but not actually very playable. ★★

FLAMES OF FREEDOM – MIDWINTER II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – There's loads to do, and the whole thing looks lovely. Hours of fun to be had from the character-designing section alone. ***Downers*** – Lots of stupid holes in the logic, and an uncomfortable balance between the strategy and action aspects. ***The Bottom Line*** – Works better in theory than in practice. *Midwinter* fans will love it, but the rest of us are likely to get very bored very quickly. ★★★★

FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER
Image Works £30.99

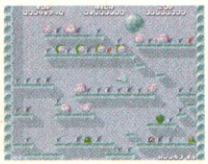
Uppers – Highly realistic and flexible (you can make it almost as simple as

you want), and decent graphics too. ***Downers*** – It's not immediately attractive by any means, and the controls are even more forbidding than usual. Bugged, too. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not technically amazing, but absorbing and entertaining, with a neat two-player link-up game. ★★★★

FRENETIC
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Fast and good-looking. ***Downers*** – You've seen this all before, and done rather more excitingly into the bargain. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slick programming only serves to make *Frenetic* tedious in a professional kind of a way. ★★

FUZZBALL
System 3 £19.99



Uppers – Big, squishy and lovable – *Fuzzball* begs to be played. Platform and puzzling styles make an intriguing cocktail. ***Downers*** – If only it was easier. Less viciousness would make all the difference. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but some irritating quirks of game design means it falls well short of classic status. ★★★★

GAUNTLET III
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A new angle on the arcade classic gives some novelty value, and makes proceedings sufficiently different this time around. ***Downers*** – The pace is ponderous, there aren't enough baddies, and the speech is badly missed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but it doesn't really live up to the legend that is *Gauntlet*. Give us a bash on *Gauntlet 2*, anyday. ★★★

GEISHA
Tomahawk £25.99

Uppers – Um, well, you *do* get to see some girls' bits. (Sorry, female readers). ***Downers*** – Tacky and fatuous 'plot', giving way to some of the most unplayable sub-games ever, with presentation of a kind that people used to get arrested for. A nightmare all round really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could this perhaps be the worst full-price game ever reviewed in AMIGA POWER? A five percent mark would seem to suggest so... ★

GEM'X
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, exquisite sound, beautifully simple

mental torture. ***Downers*** – Won't change your mind if you're not into puzzlers. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best puzzle games to date. ★★★★

GERM CRAZY
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Not quite as expensive as Mindscape's *Life & Death*. ***Downers*** – But with little else in its favour. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another half-baked idea, not followed through properly. (Where do they all come from?) ★

GENGHIS KHAN
Infogrames £39.99

Uppers – Stylish and fairly deep historical strategy game. ***Downers*** – Ridiculously expensive though, and requires a fair dose of manual reading. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bit of a cliché, but 'good if you like that sort of thing.' ★★★

GHOST BATTLE
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – The sound's quite good and the graphics are okay. ***Downers*** – Everything else is utterly awful. ***The Bottom Line*** – Badly-designed and executed *Ghosts'n'Goblins* clone that's so bad it's scary. ★

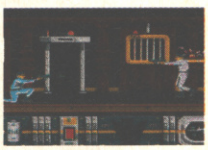
THE GODFATHER
US Gold £30.99

Uppers – Lovely to look at with plenty of good animation and rather lovely sound effects. ***Downers*** – Beneath it all it's a tedious old *RoboCop* clone. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slack and dull and lacking in challenge. Avoid. ★★

GODS
Renegade £25.53

Uppers – Lovely aesthetics, quite involved for a platform game. ***Downers*** – Not quite as good as it's made out to be. And those graphics are far too clever for their own good. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't believe the hype, but pretty damn good all the same. ★★★★

GOLDEN EAGLE
Loriciel £28.99



Uppers – Nice character animation, and a suitably French price. ***Downers*** – There's no gameplay to speak of. ***The Bottom Line*** – Uninspired, uninnovative, uninteresting, and unaddictive. ★★

GRAND PRIX MASTER
Dinamic £19.95

Uppers – Endorsed by Jorge Martinez (apparently famous on the 80cc motorcycle circuit). ***Downers*** – Handles like a Reliant Robin. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not to put too fine a point on it, useless. ★

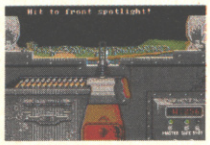
GRAEME SOUNESS VECTOR SOCCER
Impulze £25.99

Uppers – Innovative 3D graphics and some spectacular replays. ***Downers*** – It just doesn't work as a game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Plays like Gazza with both his knees knackered. ★★

GREAT NAPOPLEONIC BATTLES
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – Includes a wargame editor. ***Downers*** – The wargame part is actually very average indeed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Worth buying for the editor, if you're really into that sort of thing. ★★★

GUNBOAT
Accolade £29.99



Uppers – A sim which actually does something different. ***Downers*** – The action doesn't really convey enough excitement, and the graphics are a little on the primitive side. ***Bottom Line*** – A highly complex sim, this takes quite some time to get drawn into. ★★★

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE
Kingsoft £25.99

Uppers – A good rendition of the Hagar character, and an engaging enough game behind the licence. ***Downers*** – It's not really any better than Hi-Tec's *Scooby & Scrabby* (which is a helluvalot cheaper). ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad at all. But nothing very spectacular either. ★★★

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Almost unlimited lastability, thanks to the huge numbers of scenarios. ***Downers*** – Off-puttingly complicated, and offers nothing new to the unconverted. ***Bottom Line*** – Well put together, but still strictly for diehards. ★★

HAMMERFIST
Activision £24.99

Uppers – Graphically adept arcade adventure with tons of playability and plenty to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Iffy sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly enjoyable (if you like that sort of thing). ★★★

HARD DRIVIN' II
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Refined version of the original – less bugs, a track editor, a neat 'head-to-head' option if you link two machines... ***Downers*** – ...but still glitchy and not a patch on the arcade machine. ***The Bottom Line*** – Souped up, but not souped up enough. ★★

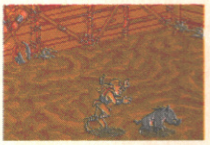
HEART OF THE DRAGON
Avatar Computing £25.99

Uppers – Lots of colours, and an (almost serious) attempt to do something new with the fantasy beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Beyond the almost impressive technical trickery lies not very much at all really. ***The Bottom Line*** – If your friend has bought it, give it a go. Then laugh very heartily at him. Entertaining in an embarrassing sort of way. ★

HEARTS OF CHINA
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Beautiful painted backdrops, with enough relevance and animation to make them justifiable, and a pretty sensible control system make it an enjoyable Far East romp. ***Downers*** – Lack of speed and the need for one meg and a hard drive, plus a lack of real plot flexibility. ***The Bottom Line*** – Sierra are carving themselves a niche with this sort of thing. Neat. ★★★★

HEIMDALL
Core Design £30.99



Uppers – Stunningly pretty and atmospheric, and it's absolutely enormous too. The cartoon-style is just gorgeous. ***Downers*** – Some nasty disk swapping and accessing, though not quite to Cinemaware 'standards'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fast-moving and slick RPG game that's miles more accessible than the genre usually is. A winner. ★★★★★

HERO QUEST
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and deceptively addictive. You don't think you've been playing it for long, but suddenly it's Thursday and you're a week late for dinner. ***Downers*** – Not so good as a one-player game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps surprisingly, a highly entertaining game, and absolutely ideal when you've got game-playing friends round. ★★★★

HERO QUEST: RETURN OF THE WITCHLORD
Gremlin £14.99

Uppers – An add-on module for fans of the original *Hero Quest* who want to take their characters into harder territory. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use to anybody else, but that's a bit inevitable. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *Hero Quest*, then this is an obvious (and fairly inexpensive) purchase. ★★★★

HILL STREET BLUES
Krisalis £24.99

Uppers – A good feel for the TV series; characters (both player and others) that you can identify with. It's certainly an interesting way to handle a licence. ***Downers*** – Gets repetitive pretty quickly, and it's not the slickest game around. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good next step for someone who's played *Sim City* to death and fancies a new challenge. Limited appeal, though. ★★★

HOME ALONE
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – The box can be used for darts practice. ***Downers*** – Atrocious gameplay, jerky graphics and terrible sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – A ludicrously unenjoyable film licence. Don't disappoint yourself.★

HUDSON HAWK
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – A film licence which actually stands up as a game in its own right. ***Downers*** – The control system can reduce some to tears, and it doesn't match *The Blues Brothers* in the arcade adventure/platform stakes. ***The Bottom Line*** – A well produced, but infuriatingly difficult, game. Try before you buy. ★★★★

HUNTER
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D graphics and loads to do. ***Downers*** – The odd little graphical glitch or two. ***Bottom Line*** – Enormously absorbing game – you'll find yourself completely captivated by it for hours on end. ★★★★★

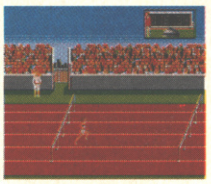
INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE
US Gold £19.99

Uppers – More fine-tuning gives *Indy* the friendliest control system yet. It's pretty faithful to the movie too! ***Downers*** – Waiting for Indy to trek across the screen all the time can get annoying and some of the puzzles are just a wee bit too abstract. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best Amiga adventures available. ★★★★

INDIANAPOLIS 500
Electronic Arts £24.95

Uppers – An immensely playable blend of true racing sim and quick track blast, with a nice line in remote camera views (if you've got a 1 meg machine). ***Downers*** – Track repetition hinders lasting appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just fabulous. ★★★★★

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS
Hawk £25.99



Uppers – Tons of fun for those who miss the days of joystick waggling. ***Downers*** – Terrible presentation, and a highly questionable price. ***The Bottom Line*** – If only it had been a tenner cheaper... ★★★

I PLAY 3D SOCCER
Simulmondo £25.99

Uppers – The most dynamic and visually convincing representation of the sport yet. ***Downers*** – The realism is so high that you hardly ever get to kick the ball, and the 3D display system can be downright confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately flawed. ★★

IRON LORD
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Cinemaware-style medieval epic with plenty of sub-games and atmospheric presentation. ***Downers*** – It's just too tough for most, and with little real depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately repetitive, but fun for a while. ★★

JAHANGIR KHAN'S CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH
Krisalis £25.53

Uppers – Easy to play, closely adheres to the rules of the real thing, and there're plenty of options on offer. ***Downers*** – There's not really a lot you can do with a squash game, is there? ***The Bottom Line*** – The best squash game around for the Amiga. (Not that there's much in the way of competition). ★★★

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D camera-style view on the action, and the actual rules and physical mechanics of the game are re-created beautifully. ***Downers*** – Well, it's still only snooker. Some extra stats would have been nice too. ***Bottom Line*** – A veritable corker. A classic. A 90 percenter. Need we say more? ★★★★★

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Two ancient sub-games offer a real rave from the grave. ***Downers*** – Another *Judge Dredd* game screwed up totally. No humour, no graphics, no game. ***The Bottom Line*** – One day somebody will do justice (ahem) to the legend of Dredd. One day. ★

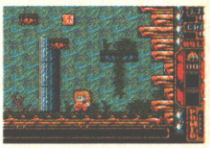
JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Surprisingly playable race game. More fun than a packet of Jammy Dodgers. ***Downers*** – Unspectacular and overpriced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not sure why, but it really is jolly good fun. ★★

KEEF THE THIEF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellent hack, slash and puzzle solving with some superb stylised graphics. ***Downers*** – It still plays like your average role-playing adventure. ***The Bottom Line*** – Respectable Tolkien-esque fare. ★★★

KID GLOVES 2
Millennium £25.99

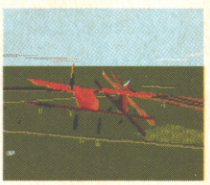


Uppers – Ther're plenty of *Super Wonder Boy* influences in there. ***Downers*** – It's got nothing to do with the original *Kid Gloves*, and it's just no fun anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – A waste of a good name, and a very poor deal. ★★

KNIGHTMARE
Mindscape £30.99

Uppers – The *Captive* system given a more appropriate fantasy setting. More compact too. ***Downers*** – Not enough thought put into the concept, and the difficulty is pitched all wrong. ***The Bottom Line*** – It feels too much like role-playing by numbers. ★★★

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Accessible and enjoyable to play, in a not-very-flight-simmy kind of way. ***Downers*** – Erm, well, there aren't quite as many buttons as some flight sims. ***The Bottom Line*** – Much more playable than you might expect, this is the surprise hit of the year in the AMIGA POWER office. ★★★★★

THE KILLING CLOUD
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and pretty graphics, bags of depth, and a great creation of atmosphere. ***Downers*** – Riddled with inconsistencies. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a contender, but badly lets itself down in the logic stakes. ★★★

KING'S BOUNTY
New World Computing £25.99

Uppers – Accessible and tidily presented, and far more playable for the non-expert than anything in this field we've seen. ***Downers*** – Nothing beyond the fact that some people won't ever get to grips with this sort of game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Superb D&D-style adventure that's fun for everyone but the most narrow of mind. ★★★★

KING'S QUEST V
Sierra £39.99

Uppers – Beautiful digitised graphics and a very friendly point and click interface. ***Downers*** – The price is one obvious downside, and only hard drive owners should bother. ***The Bottom Line*** – A mighty impressive adventure, which takes Sierra to new heights. ★★★★

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 £24.99

Uppers – Excellent 3D isometric graphics and a genuine attempt to inject some strategy into the martial arts genre. ***Downers*** – The game just isn't cohesive, and it plays like a pig. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really in the Bruce Lee league (barely scraping Jackie Chan level to be honest). ★★

LANCASTER
Actual Screenshots £24.95

Uppers – Fairly impressive 3D polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Lack of variation and any real excitement means it barely gets off the ground. ***The Bottom Line*** – Elevates averageness to an art form. ★★

LAST NINJA 3
System 3 £25.99

Uppers – Polished presentation and big improvements in look, feel and plot in the ninja's third outing. ***Downers*** – A diabolical control system and one or two flaws in execution prove major irritations. ***The Bottom Line*** – For those who go for these beat-'em-up adventures, *Last Ninja 3* is heaven sent. Others will wish to give it a wide berth. ★★★★

LEANDER
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Slice after mouthwatering slice of smooth platform action. A sizeable and endearing exercise in coolness. ***Downers*** – Shallow as hell. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately a limited romp, what it lacks in inspiration it makes up for in perspiration. ★★★★

LEISURE SUIT LARRY III
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Ridiculous, over-sexed plot. Adventuring for consenting adults. ***Downers*** – Slightly obtrusive command parser, and as usual it's over-priced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Check it out – but only if you are over eighteen. ★★★

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Utterly bizarre, pleasingly original and totally addictive. Invents a totally new category – the save-'em-up. ***Downers*** – As is the norm with such strikingly original concepts, some may wonder just what all the fuss is about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore it. *Lemmings* rule. ★★★★★

LIFE AND DEATH
Mindscape £25.53

Uppers – Excellent packaging (the surgical mask and gloves are wild), and some fairly amusing gameplay keeps things on the boil for a couple of hours. ***Downers*** – Repetition soon sets in – as a long-term challenge it all falls apart quite alarmingly. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is quite good, but there's just not enough of it. ★★

LIVING JIGSAWS
Miles Computing £24.99

Uppers – Likely to appeal to the younger Amiga users. ***Downers*** – Unlikely to appeal to anybody else, anywhere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lacks any charm whatsoever. Quite silly and pointless all round, really. ★

LOGICAL
Rainbow Arts £19.99

Uppers – The ease of play makes this a nicely accessible puzzler. ***Downers*** – But the amount of time each move takes also makes it a seriously tedious one. ***The Bottom Line*** – In a crowded world of puzzle games, *Logical* is very blunt in the mustard area. ★★

LORD OF THE RINGS
Electronic Arts £29.99

Uppers – A brilliant command system and excellent evocation of Tolkien's classic story. ***Downers*** – Everything is simply too slow and vast. Surely it could have been programmed better than this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Some great ideas, but the game just over-stretches itself. A shame. ★★★

LORDS OF CHAOS
Blade £24.99

Uppers – Great control system, comprehensive and logical. Lots of levels equal great lastability. ***Downers*** – Very little action; not much compulsion to reach your rather abstract goal. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointing game from Julian Gollop, not up to his usual standard. Wait for *Laser Squad 2*. ★★★

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, lashings of speed and that hard-to-capture driving atmosphere. ***Downers*** – The lack of crashes is a bit silly, and some track maps would have helped. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best sprite-based driving game we've seen. ★★★★★

LUPO ALBERTO
Idea £25.53

Uppers – Charming characters, a terribly translated manual, and goofy gameplay make it ideal for kids of all ages. ***Downers*** – The animation is funny for all the wrong reasons. Loveable but really rather crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – A game sure to cause argument. A case of try before you buy. ★★

MAGIC GARDEN
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – An outlandish (and gnomish) *Sim City*-ish kind of thing (sort of). ***Downers*** – Is there any demand for this sort of thing? ***The Bottom Line*** – For a game which is based around gardening, you just can't see the wood for the twee. ★★

MAGIC POCKETS
Renegade £25.99

Uppers – The usual Bitmap standards of technical excellence, and a veritable mountain of clever ideas. ***Downers*** – The graphics don't suit the game style, the design is too clever for its own good, and the pacing is hopelessly wrong. ***The Bottom Line*** – It'll sell a million, but everyone we've met finds it seriously boring. As a cute arcade platform game it's a disaster. ★★★

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE
Krisalis £25.99

Uppers – Fast, pretty, and hugely playable. ***Downers*** – The strategy section is largely superficial (and what there is is optional). ***Bottom Line*** – Great control makes this just about the best football sim so far. ★★★★

MAUPITI ISLAND
Lankhor £25.99

Uppers – Pleasantly different, with loads of character interaction.

Downers – Just too small to really justify the price. ***Bottom Line*** – Charming and interesting, but there just isn't enough of it. ★★★

MEGA LO MANIA
Image Works £30.99

Uppers – Brilliant sound effects, gorgeous speech, jolly nice graphics, completely compulsive gameplay. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a tad frustrating at times. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most accessible and arguably the most enjoyable god-sim to date. ★★★★★

MEGA TRAVELLER 1
Empire £30.64

Uppers – Terrifying depth, friendly and helpful controls, great atmosphere, excellent balance of strategy and action. ***Downers*** – It might all seem a bit too familiar to *Elite* players; occasional long disk-access pauses can irritate. ***The Bottom Line*** – A wonderful piece of role-playing software that everyone should play at least once. After that, you're unlikely to want to stop. ★★★★

MERCENARY III
Novagen £29.99

Uppers – Six different solutions, lots to explore and plenty of plot. ***Downers*** – The 3D graphics couldn't look much more dated and the gameplay is thinner than the atmosphere on an asteroid. ***The Bottom Line*** – A rather average game, both in play and looks. ★★

MERCS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Faithful conversion of the coin-op, good-looking and fast-moving... ***Downers*** – ...but still just another *Commando* clone. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great at what it does, but you're likely to want rather more from a game in this day and age. ★★★

METAL MUTANT
Silmarils £25.99

Uppers – A simple concept (exploration, fighting and puzzle solving) which works well, and has a perfect difficulty curve. ***Downers*** – Lacks any really exciting features, and too simple for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A middle-of-the-road game, which achieves what it sets out to do, but doesn't really astound. ★★★

MICROPROSE GOLF
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Looks wonderful, and just about every conceivable variation of golf is covered. ***Downers*** – Seriously overpriced, can be a bit uninvolving, and the graphical 'fog' is unfortunate and disappointing. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great golf game which just fails to match up to the standard set by *PGA Tour*. ★★★★

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well-balanced gameplay with a smooth difficulty curve makes it stand out from a hundred similar coin-op conversions. Actually more playable than the arcade original. ***Downers*** – Control is awkward at first; could be a touch faster. ***The Bottom Line*** – Best of its type. ★★★

MIGHTY BOMB JACK
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Classic gameplay with added 16-bit features like, erm, power-ups. ***Downers*** – Sprawling levels lose the original's frantic urgency. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull, dull, and then again dull. Did we mention it was dull? ★

MIG-29
Domark £29.99

Uppers – So real you'll be be hanging pictures of Gorby on your wall. ***Downers*** – Only five missions, with little in the way of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately just too techie for most Amiga owners. ★★★

MIG 29M SUPER FULCRUM
Domark £39.99

Uppers – For the serious minded flight sim fans, *MiG29M* offers a superior trip, which manages to avoided cloning its predecessor. ***Downers*** – Way short of its competitors in areas such as ground detail and instant action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive, but fans of the original won't be disappointed. ★★★★

MOONSTONE
Mindscape £30.99

Uppers – Atmospheric visuals and sound effects create a spooky game world. ***Downers*** – There's not enough of anything. Awkward disk accessing breaks the flow of the game too. ***The Bottom Line*** – A simple, arguably mediocre game, hidden beneath glossy presentation. ★★★

MONOPOLY
Leisure Genius £19.99

Uppers – A faithful version of the classic (to say the least) board-game. ***Downers*** – Who the hell wants to play a board-game on their computer anyway? ***The Bottom Line*** – Competently done, but arguably quite pointless. ★★

MONSTER BUSINESS
Eclipse £19.99

Uppers – Tons of character and classically simple *Dig Dug*-meets-*Snow Bros* gameplay make this endless fun for nostalgic arcade fans. Great music too, and a halfway-decent price tag. ***Downers*** – Once more, 'simple arcade fun' translates directly as 'shallow and transient kiddie rubbish' for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A superb arcade platform game with more life in it than a hundred copies of *Magic Pockets*. ★★★★

MOONBASE
Mindscape £35.99

Uppers – Entertaining and addictive game in the best *Sim City* tradition. ***Downers*** – Just a bit too close to *Sim City* for comfort, though. ***Bottom Line*** – Fairly short-term entertainment, and more than a touch overpriced. ★★★

MOONSHINE RACERS
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Erm, great hillbilly music. ***Downers*** – Slow, graphically horrible, totally derivative. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as bad as Amiga *Chase HQ*, and you've got to admit that's pretty damn bad. ★

'NAM
Domark £24.95

Uppers – Heavily researched, convincing and (dirty word) educational strategic war game. ***Downers*** – Very hard to win, the whole serious look to the thing could be a turn off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Political as well as tactical decision making gives a new dimension to war games. ★★★

NAVY SEALS
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – Quite good fun in a mindless arcade runaround sort of way. ***Downers*** – Technically unimpressive (to say the least), and there's very little to it. ***Bottom Line*** – Looks like an ST port, but if you can forget you paid £25 for it, it's pretty enjoyable. ★★

NAPOLEON 1
Internecine £29.99

Uppers – Historically accurate and all that kind of stuff – Boney fanatics will love it. ***Downers*** – ...but everyone else will be left completely cold. There's no attempt made to make the game accessible, it's purely for those who already know they're going to buy it before they ever see the thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you don't love the concept immediately, give this an extra-wide berth. ★★

NEBULUS 2 – POGO A-GO-GO
21st Century Entertainment £25.99

Uppers – The winning formula of the original is at the core of the game. ***Downers*** – The addition of power ups ruins the beautiful simplicity which made the first such a classic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A real waste. This is the worst kind of sequel, one which just regurgitates the ideas of its predecessor, but in a far less playable way. ★★★★

NECRONOM
Linel £25.99

Uppers – Behind all the technical boasting lies a groovy little blaster. ***Downers*** – It's not going to win any awards, and it's impossible without autofire. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad for real shoot-'em-up freaks.. ★★★★

THE NEVERENDING STORY II
Linel £25.99

Uppers – There're several sub-games for your money, and the licence is ideal subject material. ***Downers*** – Exactly how not to do a film licence. ***The Bottom Line*** – You can do much better than this. ★★

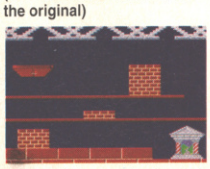
NINJA WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Novel 'Cinemascope'-esque screen layout. Dynamic Loading System is a boon but doesn't get rid of irritating swapping. ***Downers*** – Extremely repetitive action palls quickly. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even for a game of this type, the gameplay is too limited to hold the attention for any length of time. ★★

OBITUS
Psygnosis £34.99

Uppers – Intro would make a great Amiga *Deathchase* game. ***Downers*** – *Obitus* itself is a dull *Dungeon Master* rip-off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Boring and ridiculously priced. ★★

OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS!
Psygnosis £25.99 (or £19.99 as an add-on for the original)



Uppers – The same classic game it always was. ***Downers*** – Where's the imagination that gave *Lemmings* its character in the first place? ***The Bottom Line*** – A missed opportunity, but still a brilliant game. ★★★★

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Utterly mindless genocidal slaughterfest; perhaps the best *Op Wolf* style game to date. ***Downers*** – More of the coin-op's appeal is down to the cabinet-mounted Uzi than you might think, leaving the Amiga version somewhat 'flat'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Everything you could expect a conversion of *Operation Thunderbolt* to be. ★★★

OUTRUN EUROPA
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – A vast improvement on earlier *OutRun* games, the use of different vehicles adding spice. ***Downers*** – The driving feel isn't as good as it might have been and the levels aren't sufficiently different. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class driving act, but its fails to compete with the likes of *Lotus II*. ★★★★

PGA TOUR GOLF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellently presented, comprehensive, and easy as pie to get into. ***Downers*** – There's a limited amount of scope to any golf game, and *PGA* doesn't even try to transcend it. ***The Bottom Line*** – The pinnacle of Amiga golf so far. ★★★★★

PEGASUS
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Two different genres for your money – *Rastan*-type slasher and *R-Type*-ish shoot-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Neither game style is very well executed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unexciting and generally totally average game seriously lacking in character. ★★★

PIT-FIGHTER
Domark £24.99

Uppers – Interesting and distinctive looking beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – The 3D effect and digitised sprites aren't entirely convincing, and gameplay is very shallow. ***The Bottom Line*** – A close conversion of a pretty thin arcade game. ★★

POLICE QUEST 2
Sierra (Activision) £34.95

Uppers – Er, very realistic sim of a policeman's lot. ***Downers*** – ie half the game is form-filling. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too much like a tedious day at the office. ★★

POPULOUS II
Electronic Arts £29.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, more options and variety than before, and superbly paced action. ***Downers*** – It's really not all that different from

the first game at all, more of a serious update than anything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – An absolutely wonderful game, the only flaw in which is the similarity to its predecessor. If you didn't buy *Populous*, though, don't even think about missing this. ★★★★★

POPULOUS WORLD EDITOR
Electronic Arts £14.99

Uppers – The ability to customise the classic *Populous* game. ***Downers*** – There's only really so much to be done with it. ***The Bottom Line*** – As far as editors go, this one does the job well enough. ★★★

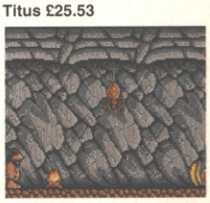
THE POWER
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Heaps of levels and a screen designer keep lasting appeal up, and the music is excellent. ***Downers*** – A touch derivative, and lacks that indefinable something that makes a puzzle game great. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try before you buy – you might like it, but rather average to our eyes. ★★★

PP HAMMER AND HIS PNEUMATIC WEAPON
Demonware £25.53

Uppers – Nicely old-fashioned platform action. Plenty of scope for double entrendres too. ***Downers*** – Annoying niggles and a tendency towards over-complication spoil it a bit. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but it could easily have been a lot better. ★★★

PREHISTORIK
Titus £25.53



Uppers – Some excellent cartoon graphics and humorous touches make it an instantly likeable game. ***Downers*** – Suffers in comparison to *Toki* and *Chuck Rock*. Needs a number of rough edges polishing up. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough little caveman romp, but it's not really an essential purchase. ★★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund £24.99

Uppers – Phenomenal animation, loads of atmosphere and some good old-fashioned gameplay. ***Downers*** – Control is initially tricky, and getting sent to the start of a level every time you die is always annoying. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically stunning and great fun at the same time. Why can't all games be like this? ★★★★★

PROFLIGHT
Hi Soft £39.95

Uppers – Terrifyingly accurate – possibly the most accurate flight simulator ever. ***Downers*** – Such a good simulator that there isn't really room for any game at all. ***Bottom Line*** – Miles too realistic to be any fun to play. Still, it's less expensive than a real flying lesson. ★★

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Possibly the most realistic sports sim to grace the Amiga, with features galore. ***Downers*** – So if you hate the real thing, you won't go for this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nothing short of wonderful. ★★★★

PURSUIT TO EARTH
Exocet £19.95

Uppers – Reminiscent of *Gyruss*, the classic arcade zapper. ***Downers*** – But completely crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – About as much fun as getting hit by a real Exocet. ★

QUEST FOR GLORY II – TRIAL BY FIRE
Sierra £40.85

Uppers – Sorry, can't think of any. Oh no, wait, you *do* get lots of disks for your money. ***Downers*** – But no game to put on them. Incompetently programmed, dreadfully-designed, staggeringly-overpriced trash. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the worst Amiga fantasy role-playing game you will ever see. Avoid it like an bad-tempered tiger with toothache. ★

RAILROAD TYCOON
MicroProse £29.99

Uppers – Frightening amount of depth. ***Downers*** – Very slow to get into (and very slow even when you *do* get into it). ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a lot of time to invest in it, well worth a look. *Sim City* is still the better of the two, though. ★★★★

RALLY CROSS CHALLENGE
Anco £19.95

Uppers – Well-programmed *Super Sprint* clone that's great fun with multiple players. ***Downers*** – Limited lastability. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best in its field, but that's more down to lack of competition than anything else. ★★

RBI TWO BASEBALL
Domark £29.99

Uppers – Excellent simulation of baseball, and beautifully presented to boot. ***Downers*** – Over-priced and not all that hot on lasting appeal. ***Bottom Line*** – Very good, but a bit limited, and not quite a classic. ★★★★

REALMS
Virgin £29.99

Uppers – An interesting and slickly presented variation on the *Kingdoms* theme. The great battle sequences really make the game. ***Downers*** – There can be just too much routine realm-keeping. ***The Bottom Line*** – It'll take a little used to, but basically a terrific game. ★★★★

RENEGADE LEGION INTERCEPTOR
SSI/US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Military hardware a-go-go gives it instant RPG appeal. ***Downers*** – The strategy isn't deep enough, and the action sequences are way out of date. ***Bottom Line*** – Tales of galactic empires and warfare are a good idea, but this one just falls flat. ★

REVELATION
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Neat idea – a puzzle game based on safe cracking. ***Downers*** – Too complex to just pick up and play – bad news for a puzzler. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad, but could have been better presented (and who thought up that utterly meaningless name?) ★★

RISE OF THE DRAGON
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Atmospheric Blade Runner-style first-person adventure which combines digitised photos and comic-book presentation. ***Downers*** – Another hard drive game, and its not the most complex adventure ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, different and involving. ★★★★

ROBOCOD
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Wit, console-style graphics and gameplay hide behind a barrage of visual jokes and puns. ***Downers*** – Perhaps it could have been a little 'tighter'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as impressive as *Rainbow Islands*! ★★★★★

ROBOCOP 3
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – Some of the best 3D driving and shoot-'em-up action yet. It sets unprecedented standards for this sort of thing. ***Downers*** – Though large, there isn't as much here as a good number of 3D games. ***The Bottom Line*** – Impressive and deservedly a great success. ★★★★★

ROBIN HOOD
Millennium £25.99

Uppers – Witty and cheerful game that makes you love it almost in spite of itself. ***Downers*** – Tiny graphics can get irritating, and there are lots of silly little quirks. ***The Bottom Line*** – Likeable game that's a long way short of classic status, but damn good fun all the same. ★★★★

ROBOZONE
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Three totally different elements (*Killing Game Show* variant, *Dungeon Master* style sub-game, and *R-Type*-esque scroller) in one game... ***Downers*** – ...none of which are done at all well. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced as a budget game (nice front-end sequence though). ★

RODLAND
Storm £25.99

Uppers – Too-cute-to-be-true graphics, wonderful presentation, a near-perfect arcade game in the traditional sense. ***Downers*** – If you're looking for depth and complexity, look somewhere else. ***The Bottom Line*** – A magnificent conversion that actually improves significantly on the original coin-op. Loveable and extremely addictive, you couldn't ask for a better platform arcade game. ★★★★★

ROLLING RONNY
Virgin £25.99

Uppers – Cute, console-style graphics and easy-to-grasp platform gameplay give *Ronny* instant appeal. ***Downers*** – Beneath the varnish lies not very much at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very plain game which offers nothing new to Amiga gamers. ★★

R-TYPE II
Activision £25.99

Uppers – 99 percent arcade-perfect, and a beautiful and addictive shoot-'em-up in its own right. ***Downers*** – A couple of tiny bugs, and maybe off-puttingly difficult. (For wimps, anyway). ***Bottom Line*** – The best space blast for the Amiga yet, and possibly the best coin-op conversion too. Superb. ★★★★★

RUGBY COACH
D & H Games £24.99

Uppers – It makes a change from football coach games. ***Downers*** – But it's not exactly drastically different from them. ***The Bottom***

Line – There's nothing funadamentally wrong with it, except that it's a management game. ★★

RUGBY – THE WORLD CUP
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Fast, slick and frenetic action, and brilliant as a two-player game. ***Downers*** – Sacrifices a lot of realism in the quest for flowing play, like penalties for a start. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent rendition of the sport which puts playability before authenticity to great effect. ★★★★★

SARAKON
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Brilliant *Shanghai*-inspired gameplay make this a strategy classic, and the price is a nice surprise. ***Downers*** – Slightly indistinct symbols can occasionally confuse matters. ***The Bottom Line*** – A supremely addictive puzzler, in the finest 'takes over your entire life' tradition. ★★★★

SEARCH FOR THE KING
Accolade £34.99

Uppers – Superb Elvis gags and attention to detail (particularly in the graphics) mean graphic adventure fans will take to it immediately. ***Downers*** – Accolade blow it to a certain extent with their inefficient parser system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still a long way to go before it competes with the likes of *Monkey Island*. ★★★

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – The closest thing yet to a fully interactive story. Enormous playability, pleasing puzzles and great dollops of – yes! – genuinely witty humour come together to form something very glorious (and very different) indeed. ***Downers*** – Despite the five disks, you'll still need a full meg of ram, and once the game is completed you'll probably never come back to it again. ***The Bottom Line*** – An adventure that looks and plays better than almost any arcade game. Sheer software heaven. Destined for all-time classic status. ★★★★★

7 COLOURS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Interesting Othello-based concept. ***Downers*** – Useless documentation, terrible music, and relies too heavily on luck for a board game. ***The Bottom Line*** – More or less okay for the first few hours, but rapidly gets horribly boring. ★★

SHADOW SORCERER
US Gold £27.99

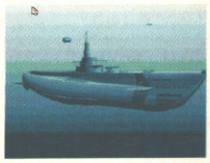
Uppers – Very different to the usual

SSI orc-slashing fare. ***Downers*** – Disjointed plot and badly thought-out playing system means it never really gets going. ***The Bottom Line*** – Neither as playable as *Hero Quest* or as hardcore as *Eye Of The Beholder*, *Shadow Sorceror* falls uncomfortably between two stools. ★★★

SHANGHAI
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Based on an ancient Chinese tile game, so you know it's going to torture your mind, and it does. Friendly presentation too, and the multi-player against-the-clock games are action-packed enough for the most frenzied blasting fan. ***Downers*** – Slightly fiddly graphics can play havoc with your eyes. ***The Bottom Line*** – Scarily gripping for a game with no moving graphics. The first time you do it you'll want to take out an advert in The Times to tell everybody. ★★★★★

SILENT SERVICE 2
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Engrossing and accurate simulation that could well take over your life. ***Downers*** – If you're not into military strategy, this has little chance of changing your mind. ***The Bottom Line*** – All you sub fans (yes, you!) will know what to expect, so dive in. ★★★★

THE SIMPSONS
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A good licence AND a good game. Brilliant console-like scrolling arcade platform sort of thing. ***Downers*** – The main game doesn't really rely on the Simpsons theme, and a bit too complicated for Bart's younger fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – The licence of the year, quite probably. ★★★★

SKI OR DIE
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***Downers*** – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun (for a while) with friends, but basically an old fashioned, patchy collection of unimpressive sub games. ★

SKULL AND CROSSBONES
Domark £24.99

Uppers – It's all reasonably true to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Pity it was so crap then, isn't it? ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun being keelhauled.★

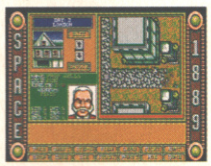
SLIDERS
Palace £25.99

Uppers – Clean 3D isometric graphics, with loads of sporting and *Marble Madness* overtones thrown in for good measure. ***Downers*** – The result is frankly less enjoyable than it sounds. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy yourself *Spindizzy Worlds* or *Speedball 2* instead. ★★

SMASH TV
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – At last – an Amiga version of the classic arcade game. A lifetime of gross-out ultraviolence awaits. ***Downers*** – It's a cut-down interpretation of the arcade original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointment, but still a damn good game. ★★★★

SPACE 1889
Empire £30.99



Uppers – Another fine game in the *MegaTraveller* mould, with a a wonderfully imaginative plot. ***Downers*** – A touch too complicated and getting started is a pain. ***The Bottom Line*** – If it's your thing, it's worth a go. ★★★

SPACE ACE II – BORF'S REVENGE
Empire £34.99

Uppers – It looks pretty, and it's moderately entertaining for the first three minutes. ***Downers*** – You'll finish it inside three hours and you'll hate it so much you'll never want to see it again. ***The Bottom Line*** – Disjointed, ridiculously small, gameplay-free, stupendously priced, immensly frustrating. Complete trash. ★

SPEEDBALL II
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – The ultimate future sport game to date – fast, brutal, enormously playable. The Bitmaps' finest moment. ***Downers*** – Teams can be hard to tell apart in the heat of the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy or die. ★★★★★

SPELLBOUND
Psyclapse £24.99

Uppers – Well-drawn backdrops, and, erm, the packaging is nice. ***Downers*** – Almost no in-game sound, practically nothing in the way of action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hugely boring arcade adventure thing that's overpriced by £20. ★

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Plenty of variation, and it certainly all looks lovely. ***Downers*** – Pitifully slow, and the different sections don't really seem to gel together. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a few hours to kill while you're waiting for a train, this is a game that you can load up without fear of it causing you to miss it. (On the other hand, standing on the platform might be more fun). ★★

SPOT
Leisure Genius £25.99

Uppers – Brilliantly-designed Othello-based board game which still manages to offer something new and different (and even supports up to four players). ***Downers*** – The presentation lacks polish in places. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class board-like strategy act. ★★★★★

STELLAR 7
Dynamix (Sierra) £24.99

Uppers – Appealingly old-fashioned blast from the past in the form of (yet another!) up-dated *Battlezone*. ***Downers*** – Ever-so-slightly sluggish vector graphics and optimistic pricing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Satisfyingly mindless – but that's both a strength and a weakness. ★★

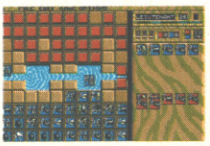
STEVE MCQUEEN WESTPHASER
Loriciels £25.99

Uppers – Almost reasonable graphics and some cute bits (it's possible to shoot the clothes off people!). ***Downers*** – Pretty hopeless shooting-gallery style gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't even waste your time thinking about it. ★

STORMBALL
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably passable graphics. ***Downers*** – Utterly dire game design, no feeling of speed or excitement, highly confusing and largely pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you're looking for a good way to waste £25, throw it down a drain rather than buy this. ★

STRATEGO
Accolade £25.99

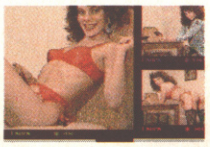


Uppers – An engaging strategy bash for one player at least, it adheres to the rules and appearance of the board game remarkably well. ***Downers*** – The fact that it can only be a one player game takes all the fun out of it. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fun board game which can never really work on computer. ★★

STRIKER MANAGER
D&H Games £24.99

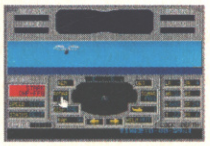
Uppers – From the people who brought you *Football Director* (yes, that's its only good point). ***Downers*** – Statistic frenzy with absolutely no gameplay whatsoever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could push the boundaries of computer games backwards by ten years. ★

STRIP POKER DELUXE
CDS £24.99



Uppers – Can anybody think of any? We can't. ***Downers*** – The poker game is rubbish, the graphics are flickery and all the girls are ugly anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you want to see pictures of naked women there are better, cheaper and less sad ways of going about it. ★

STRIKE FLEET
Electronic Arts £29.99



Uppers – Military freaks will enjoy the number of missions and the amazing array of hardware. ***Downers*** – Discerning gamers will be disappointed by the shallow nature of the gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really what we've come to expect from developers Lucasfilm. ★★★

SUPAPLEX
Dream Factory £25.99

Uppers – The *Boulder Dash* game style makes a comeback. ***Downers*** – But all the magic has been removed and the levels are poorly designed. ***The Bottom Line*** – There are half-a-dozen PD *Boulder Dash* games better than this. ★

SUPER MONACO GP
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and fun. ***Downers*** – Bears very little resemblance to the coin-op. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very good racing game, but don't expect the arcade. ★★★

SUPER SPACE INVADERS
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Brilliant intro and great sound. ***Downers*** – Incredibly slow, and closer in play to the original *Space Invaders* than the coin-op it's supposed to be a conversion of. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically inept and extremely disappointing version of one of the year's most enjoyable arcade shoot-'em-ups. ★★

SUPER SKWEEK
Loriciel £19.99

Uppers – Cute *Defusion/Painter*-based game with power-ups and add-ons galore. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little to French for most of us. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could do with having another fiver chopped off the price, but otherwise great fun. ★★★

SUPER WONDER BOY
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Perfect difficulty curve lets you get just a little bit further every go. Cute graphics add to the charm and the shops where you can spend your gold give it a little extra scope. ***Downers*** – Slightly lacking in action, too slow for some. Not exactly modern looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great game in the *Mario* vein, but with less enemies and more depth. ★★★

SWAP
Palace £25.99

Uppers – Interesting and new idea for a puzzle game, programmed perfectly competently. ***Downers*** – It just isn't captivating, and never rises above the averageness. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fails to inspire any emotions at all. It's not good, it's not bad. It's just a bit bland. ★★

SWITCHBLADE II
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Gorgeous console-like graphics, tried-and-tested gameplay, packed full of detail and lovely touches. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a little too simple. ***The Bottom Line*** – Absolutely superb. Arguably the best Amiga platform game to date. ★★★★★

SWIV
Storm £24.99

Uppers – Looks good, sounds good, comes with a neat two-player option – and all in one (massive) level too! ***Downers*** – There aren't any (unless you find all those drab military-style colours a bit depressing or don't actually like shoot-'em-ups at all). ***The Bottom Line*** – Frantic and fabulous– one of the best shoot-'em-ups we've seen. ★★★★★

SWORDS AND GALLEONS
Idea £25.99

Uppers – Uses the classic trading game style to great effect. ***Downers*** – Easy to complete and the stupid omission of a save game option. ***The Bottom Line*** – A minority interest sort of affair. ★★

TANGRAM
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – Perfectly adequate computer translation of the classic Oriental puzzle. ***Downers*** – ... unfortunately it's a really dumb idea for a conversion, and the extras (time limit and suchlike) are intrusive and pointless. ***Bottom Line*** – Getting a real wooden Tangram set would be more fun, as well as much cheaper. ★

TETRIS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Well, it is still *Tetris*.

Downers – But it's probably the worst version yet seen on the Amiga, and that's saying something. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely stinky. (Stick with the PD versions). ★

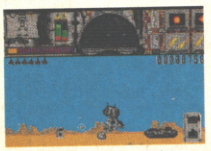
THEIR FINEST MISSIONS
US Gold £15.99

Uppers – A handy missions disk for *Their Finest Hour*, sure to prolong game life. ***Downers*** – It's really only for lazy people who can't be bothered to construct their own missions with the editor in the original game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but only if you've got the original (obviously). ★★★★

THEME PARK MYSTERY
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Great feel; looks and sounds lovely. ***Downers*** – Arcade sections are fairly pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – Games which mix adventures with arcade sequences always suffer for it. ★★

THUNDER BURNER
Loriciel £19.99



Uppers – It's nice(?) to see the *Afterburner* game style make a comeback, and there's a novel VCR facility. ***Downers*** – The game is fundamentally flawed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly disappointing rubbish with no challenge whatsoever. ★

THUNDERJAWS
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Um...some quite nice cameo screens with cute babes. ***Downers*** – Crap graphics, crap sound, no gameplay and serious bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – A poor-to-middling coin-op turns into an appalling Amiga game. A total waste of time and money. ★

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very fast, with some pretty hairy track views. Unintentionally hilarious replay feature. ***Downers*** – Insanely sensitive to control. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enough fun to keep you playing until you can at least stay on the road for five seconds at 60mph, but a bit too unrealistic to compete with *Indy 500*. ★★★

TERMINATOR 2
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – You get exactly what you'll be expecting – Another Ocean Movie Licence With Lots Of Sub-Games And No Depth. ***Downers*** – Only one of the sub-games has any real merit of its own, and the rest are even worse than the norm for this kind of thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty hopeless run-of-the-mill effort for real diehard Arnie fans only. ★★

TILT
Genias £25.99

Uppers – A good puzzle game idea. ***Downers*** – Sadly the game itself just doesn't really work. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nice try, but something just isn't right and the gameplay's not there. ★★

TIP OFF
Anco £24.99

Uppers – Decent coaching option for those so inclined. It's also rather playable as an arcade game. ***Downers*** – The control isn't as intuitive as it should be. ***The Bottom Line*** – A decent (but uninspiring) simulation of baskeball. ★★★

TOKI
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – The (latest) definitive coin-op conversion. ***Downers*** – The sound is slightly disappointing, and the game is simply too small. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is brilliant, if only there was more of it. ★★★★★

TOTAL RECALL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A fair bit of gameplay variation. ***Downers*** – Unfriendly controls, uninspired design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Solid but unexciting. ★★

TOURNAMENT GOLF
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Authentic arcade port. ***Downers*** – Nobody ever played the arcade game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely average golfing yawnerama. ★★

TOWER FRA
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Yes, you guessed it, it's an air traffic control tower simulation. Not as boring as it sounds. ***Downers*** – It's still fairly boring though. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good training for the next generation of air traffic controllers. ★★

3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Domark/Incentive £49.99

Uppers – Creating your own games (or simply designing little worlds) is great fun. ***Downers*** – Well, it's not really a game as such, is it? It's pretty slow too, and making anything really worthwhile gets very complicated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive and of limited appeal, but if you've always itched to create a Freescape game you can't really complain. ★★★

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Enjoyable mindless blasting. ***Downers*** – Erm, has there been some mistake here? Someone appears to have sent us a copy of *Turrican*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Better than the original, but that's the only way in which it's different. ★★★

ULTIMA V
Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – The scope and depth of *Ultima V* goes way beyond other role-playing adventures, even previous *Ultima* releases. ***Downers*** – Not a bit of joystick action in sight; some may find the size of the game daunting. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Ultima V* offers arguably the best in graphic fantasy (at least until *Ultima VI* comes along). ★★★★★

UNDER PRESSURE
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Well, if you like the look of Psygnosis games, you'll like the look of this. ***Downers*** – The execrable walk-and-shoot gameplay would bore a five-year-old. ***The Bottom Line*** – If it's supposed to be a joke, it's very funny. If it's supposed to be an enjoyable game for £26, it's a very bad joke. ★

VOLFIED
Empire £25.99

Uppers – *Qix* was always a brilliant game, and this extremely close coin-op conversion adds to it without overwhelming it. ***Downers*** – Limited number of screens cuts down on its potential lifespan. ***The Bottom Line*** – A classic arcade game excellently converted, but you won't be playing it forever. ★★★

UMS II
Rainbird (MicroProse) £34.99

Uppers – The pinnacle of tech-head wargames, with more user-definable bits than you could ever need. ***Downers*** – Atrocious documentation could mentally scar beginners for life. ***The Bottom Line*** – It won't win the wargaming fraternity any new members, but it'll put some in seventh heaven. ★★★

UTOPIA
Gremlin £29.99

Uppers – The appeal of this kind of city-building thing is timeless, and the

war side gives it a new dimension. ***Downers*** – ...but neither side is particularly well-designed, and it can easily end up a touch on the dull side. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good game, but it needs a lot more depth to make it a true classic. ★★★★

VIZ
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Very true to the comic. ***Downers*** – Very shallow and limited. The jokes only really work the first time you see them. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun while it lasts, but after the first couple of hours you've seen all it's got to offer. ★★

WARLOCK THE AVENGER
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Playable and quite engrossing scrolling arcade adventure romp. ***Downers*** – An 8-bit game in 16-bit's clothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Druid* slightly updated for the 90s, and not by any stretch of the imagination worth £25. ★★

WARZONE
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Graphics have a degree of character to them, and it's pretty tough. ***Downers*** – Adds very little to the hackneyed *Ikari Warriors* format. ***The Bottom Line*** – Competent but deadly dull shoot-'em-up that you've seen a dozen times before. ★★

WHITE SHARKS
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Exceptionally good graphics, novel 'choose-your-own-power-ups' weapon system. ***Downers*** – Too fast to have any decent feel, and incredibly unimaginative. ***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'bog standard' into 'bog standard shoot-'em-up'. Duff. ★★

WILDLIFE
MD Production £19.99

Uppers – Ideologically sound. ***Downers*** – *Operation Wolf* without shooting is like swimming without water. ***The Bottom Line*** – Utterly desperate. ★

WILD WHEELS
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – Attractive presentation and competent programming make *Wild Wheels* an appealing prospect. ***Downers*** – The whole concept is remarkably shaky, and simply proves unplayable. ***The Bottom Line*** – More like *Mediocre Wheels*, really. ★★

WOLFCHILD
Core Design £25.99

Uppers – It looks good when it isn't moving too much, and the gameplay's a tried-and-trusted style. ***Downers*** – Very derivative of Switchblade, and the scrolling is a bit on the crude side. Most importantly though, it lacks any kind of spark. ***The Bottom Line*** – Initially quite good fun, but a rather half-hearted game. ★★★

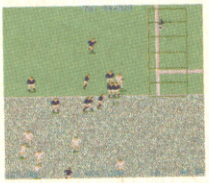
WONDERLAND
Virgin £24.95

Uppers – An evocative telling of the classic Lewis Carrol tale utilising a pretty advanced user-interface. ***Downers*** – Unless you've got a very powerful Amiga with a screen that can handle interlace, the whole thing is very unwieldy. It's not got the best parser in the world either. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but after all the hype the product is something of a let-down. Not a patch on *Monkey Island*. ★★★

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Very good copy of the coin-op (sob). ***Downers*** – Poor playability, you never get two seconds on the ball. ***The Bottom Line*** – Knocked out in the first round. ★★

WORLD CLASS RUGBY
Audiogenic £25.99



Uppers – The most accurate and technical representation of rugby we've seen. ***Downers*** – Unfortunately, the playability suffers, and the instant appeal is lacking. ***The Bottom Line*** – It has its virtues, but it doesn't quite pull it off. ★★★

WRECKERS
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Some refreshing game ideas add a new angle to the old 'aliens-overrun-space station' story. ***Downers*** – The whole thing feels far too much like an 8-bit game – right down to the colour schemes. ***The Bottom Line*** – All the elements of a good game are there – they just haven't been tied together properly. ★★

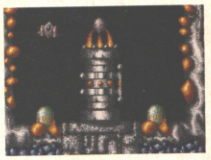
WWF WRESTLEMANIA
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – There aren't many, apart from the free video. ***Downers*** – There's a complete abscence of WWF's sparkle and a lack of fluid, stimulating grappling action. ***The Bottom Line*** – There's disappointment in store for grapple fans and WWF viewers alike. Come back Big Daddy, all is forgiven. ★★

XIPHOS
Electronic Zoo £24.99

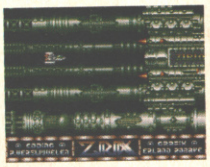
Uppers – Silky smooth and pretty darn subtle. ***Downers*** – Takes far too long to get into the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only for the dedicated space trader. ★★

ZARATHRUSTA
Hewson £24.99



Uppers – The *Thrust* gameplay is timeless, and it's been updated with 1990s graphics, resulting in something very special indeed. ***Downers*** – At heart though, it's still a game that used to sell for £1.99 going for £25, which isn't a bargain in anyone's language. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but to be honest, not really very good value. ★★★

ZIRIAX
The Software Business £24.99



Uppers – Pretty *Scramble* variant. ***Downers*** – Seriously overloaded in the difficulty department. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stupidly difficult, too much for almost everyone. More suited to a budget release. ★★

ZONE WARRIOR
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Well, you don't see many games of this style anymore. ***Downers*** – But that's a bit of a blessing really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even the programmers of this trashy arcade adventure must have been left with an empty feeling. Avoid it at all costs. ★

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BACK ISSUES

1 May 1991 Our very first issue! Big games like *Eye Of The Beholder, Gods* and *Cybercon III*, the first part of a gigantic *Rainbow Islands* player's guide, lots of chat from the Bitmap/Renegade crew and more! **On the disk:** *Bombuzal* – the complete game!

2 June 1991 And it just gets better! If you manage to get past the (ahem) swoony picture of Peter Molyneux on the cover you'll get to thrill to such treats as a giant Bullfrog interview and reviews of games like – yes! – *Monkey Island*! **On the disk:** *Kid Gloves* – the complete game!

3 July 1991 You want to know about Core Design? CDTV? *F-15 Strike Eagle II*? *Deuteros*? *Toki*? Then this issue is the place to come! It's even got our first 'In The Style Of...' in it! **On the disk:** brilliant *Exile* special world, *Prehistorik* preview, three typically excellent PD games!

4 August 1991 The Ultimate Autumn Preview, film games, The Assembly Line interviewed, *Jimmy White's Snooker* reviewed and more! **On the disk:** *Beast Busters, The Executioner* plus three PD games! **Plus!** Giant tips poster – *Kid Gloves* and *Bombuzal* solutions!

5 September 1991 Giant Gremlin Work In Progress feature, all the new god sims compared, DMA Design talk *Lemmings, Mega lo Mania, The Simpsons, Thunderhawk* reviewed. **On the disk:** *Barbarian II* demo, plus five (five!) great PD games!

6 October 1991 *Indy Atlantis*, and more – giant US Gold Work In Progress feature, *Midwinter II, Cruise For A Corpse, Magic Pockets* reviewed. **On the disk:** *Rolling Ronny, Captain Planet, Bullfrogger* and more! **Plus!** Five free AMIGA POWER postcards!

7 November 1991 *Monkey Island II, Young Indy Jones* – Lucasfilm tell all, World Of Commodore show, Bob Jacob of Cinemaware interviewed, *Formula 1 Grand Prix, Blues Brothers, Lotus II, Robocod* reviewed... **On the disk:** *Leander*, Video Kid plus PD games!

8 December1991 All I want for Xmas... seasonal hardware guide, giant Xmas compilations feature, reviews coming out of our ears (*Populous II, First Samurai, Heimdall, MicroProse Golf, Knights Of The Sky*...) **On the disk:** *Cisco Heat, Elvira Arcade*, best of PD!

9 January 1992 Giant FRP game feature, Code Masters interviewed, our Games Of The Year, reviews of *Smash TV, Birds Of Prey, Knightmare* and more! **Double disk issue!** Giant *Knights Of The Sky* entire training section, *Puggles* (great *Q-Bert*-style PD game).

10 February 1992 The Ultimate Spring Game Guide, If Graftgold had known then, the best and worst of games packaging, plus reviews of *RoboCop 3, Another World, WWF, Leander* and much, much more! **On the disk:** PD Special – featuring *Mr Wobbly Leg, Raid* and *Squamble*.

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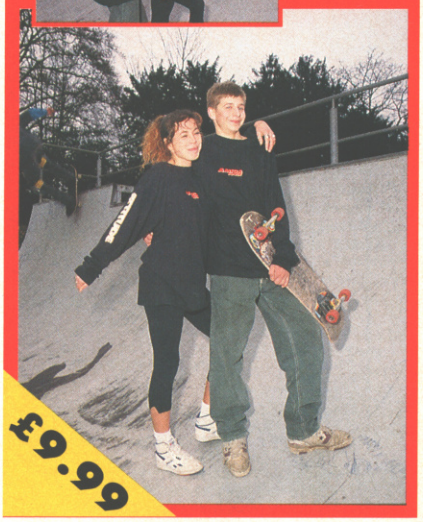

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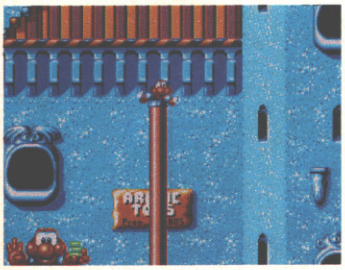

ROBOCOD

Many slick, fast arcade games are judged against the best 16-bit console stuff – *Robocod* is one that can actually stand such comparisons. Hilarious, original, superbly crafted, and if not quite as fast as *Sonic The Hedgehog, pretty* damn close, this is quite simply one of the best Amiga fun products of the past year. Superb!

AP rated 87 percent.

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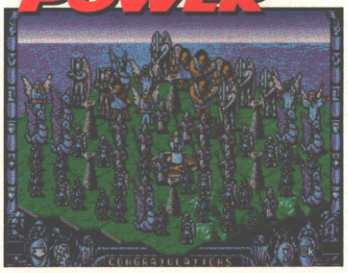
AP rated (at least) 82 percent.



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AP rated 89 percent.

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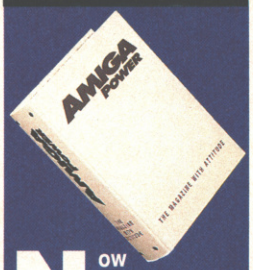

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BUB & BOB

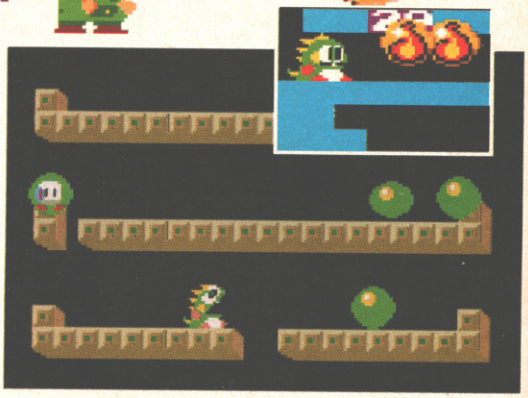
Every month this new series will build into a complete guide to the major characters who've appeared on the Amiga. This month we kick off with...

BUB AND BOB

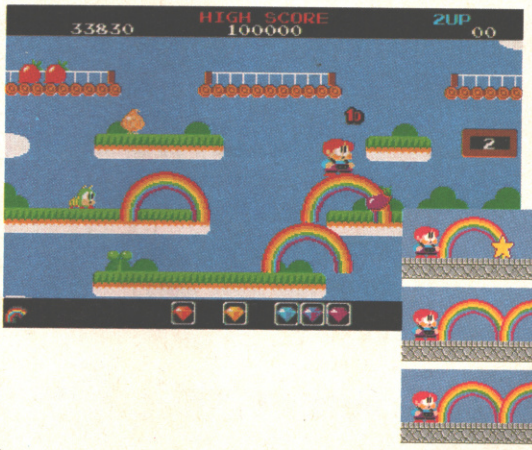
FULL NAMES Bubble and Bobble (no known family name)
OCCUPATION Heroes
ALSO KNOWN AS Bub and Bob, Bubby and Bobby (there is a school of though that holds it that the Bubby and Bobby of *Rainbow Islands* are actually the sons of the *Bubble Bobble* characters, but since this has never been made completely clear we'll treat them as the same characters)
LEGAL STATUS Citizens of unknown magical land (possibly the Rainbow Islands) with no known criminal record, still minors
MARITAL STATUS Single
KNOWN RELATIVES AND ASSOCIATES Mom and Dad (parents), Patty and Betty (sweethearts)
GROUP AFFILIATIONS None known
BASE OF OPERATIONS Un-named cave, the Rainbow Islands
FIRST APPEARANCE *Bubble Bobble* (Taito coin-op), 1986
HISTORY Bub and Bob, two 'bantom-weight brontosaures', go into the magic cave to rescue their sweethearts, Betty and Patty, who've been kidnapped by a wicked witch. Bub and Bob finally defeat the witch and rescue not only their sweethearts, but their Mom and Dad too, who'd (apparently) also been captured. This story is told in the game *Bubble Bobble*.

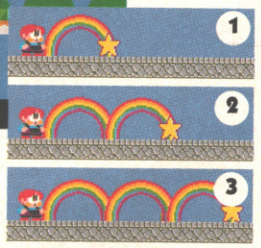
When we next meet Bub and Bob, in the game *Rainbow Islands*, they are revealed to actually be two small boys who'd merely been transformed into dinosaurs by a wizard in the earlier game. This time their mission is to destroy the Prince Of Darkness, an evil entity who has overrun the Rainbow Islands with bad animals. In the latest game, *Parasol Stars*, Bub and Bob must actually save the entire universe (!) from the mad warrior Chaostikahn who has unleashed his monsters on a number of innocent planets.
HEIGHT Unknown, probably under 4 feet
WEIGHT Unknown
EYES White with black pupils
HAIR Red/brown
STRENGTH LEVEL As far as is known, normal strength for boys of their size and age who indulge in a reasonable amount of exercise.
KNOWN ABILITIES In all three games, jumping a certain distance, normally about 3/5 times their own height. Beyond that they have one known superhuman ability which appears in each game. In *Bubble Bobble*, the boys (in dinosaur form) can fire bubbles from their mouths in which they capture enemies. When jumped upon, these bubbles burst and the enemy is transformed into a collectable piece of fruit or other similar goodie.

In *Rainbow Islands* our heroes, now back in human form, can fire Magic Rainbows. (For details, see the accompanying illustration). In *Parasol Stars* the boys carry small umbrellas, whose primary use is to hit or throw objects or bad creatures.
PARAPHENALIA Bub and Bob don't carry anything in the first two games – they absorb fruit and other bonus objects or, in the case of gems, presumably put them in their pockets. (The items disappear at any rate). The weapons they use – bubbles and rainbows – are somehow created magically by the boys as and when they're needed. In *Parasol Stars*, however, they use external weapons – small umbrellas which have a number of uses in the boys' hands...



In *Bubble Bobble*, the first game, our dinosaur-shaped chums croak bubbles from their mouths. Here we see Bub (Bob?) in open mouthed pose, an assortment of loose bubbles, and one baddie trapped in a bubble (top left) floating slowly down screen. If Bub/Bob manages to jump on the bubble within a time limit he'll turn the baddie into a piece of collectable fruit. The inset shows a collectable power up – dragon-style fireballs.





Making rainbows, *Rainbow Islands*-style. First you throw a magic yellow star – pic 1. This leaves a rainbow in its wake – pics 2 and 3 show the increased numbers of rainbows you get once you've collected extra power-ups. Hitting a baddie with the yellow star will kill him, as will trapping him under a rainbow and then jumping on it to shatter it.

Bub (or is it Bob?) in the new, yet-to-be-released *Bubble Bobble* game, *Parasol Stars*. Brighter, more detailed screens than in the first two games, though the simple drawing style remains. New colours aside, Bub (and, indeed, Bob) look near identical to their *Rainbow Islands* incarnations. Gameplay is like a cross between the first two games.

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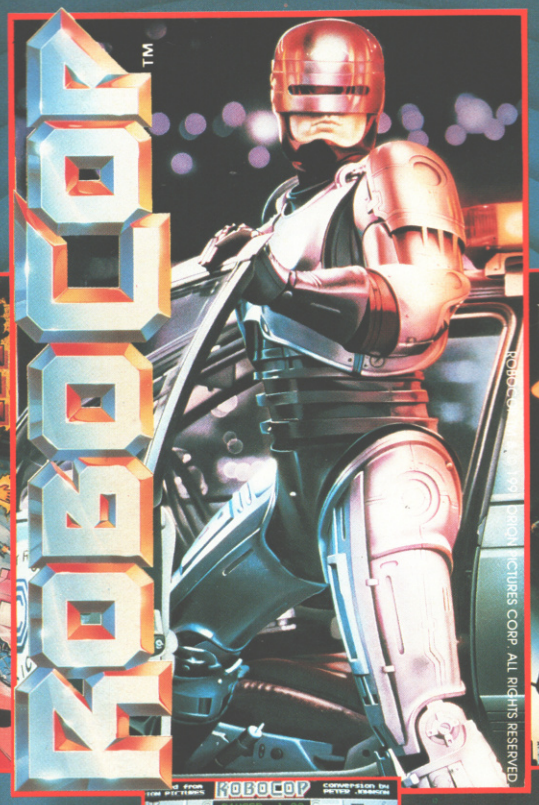

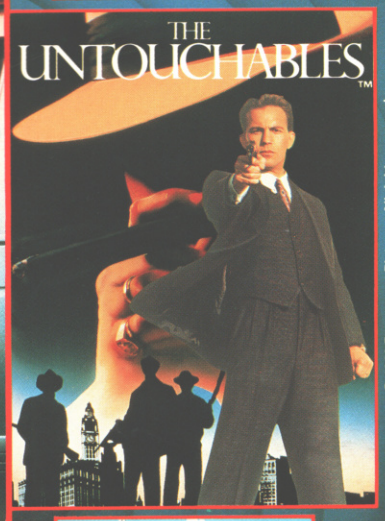

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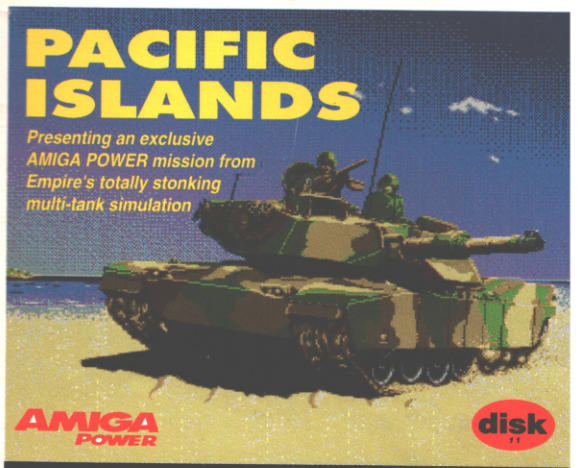

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